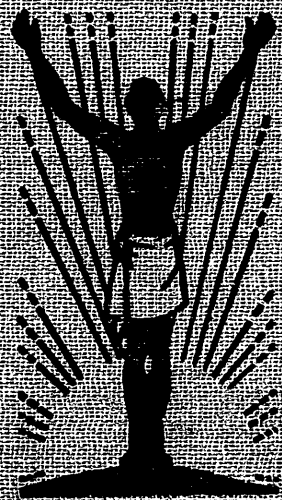


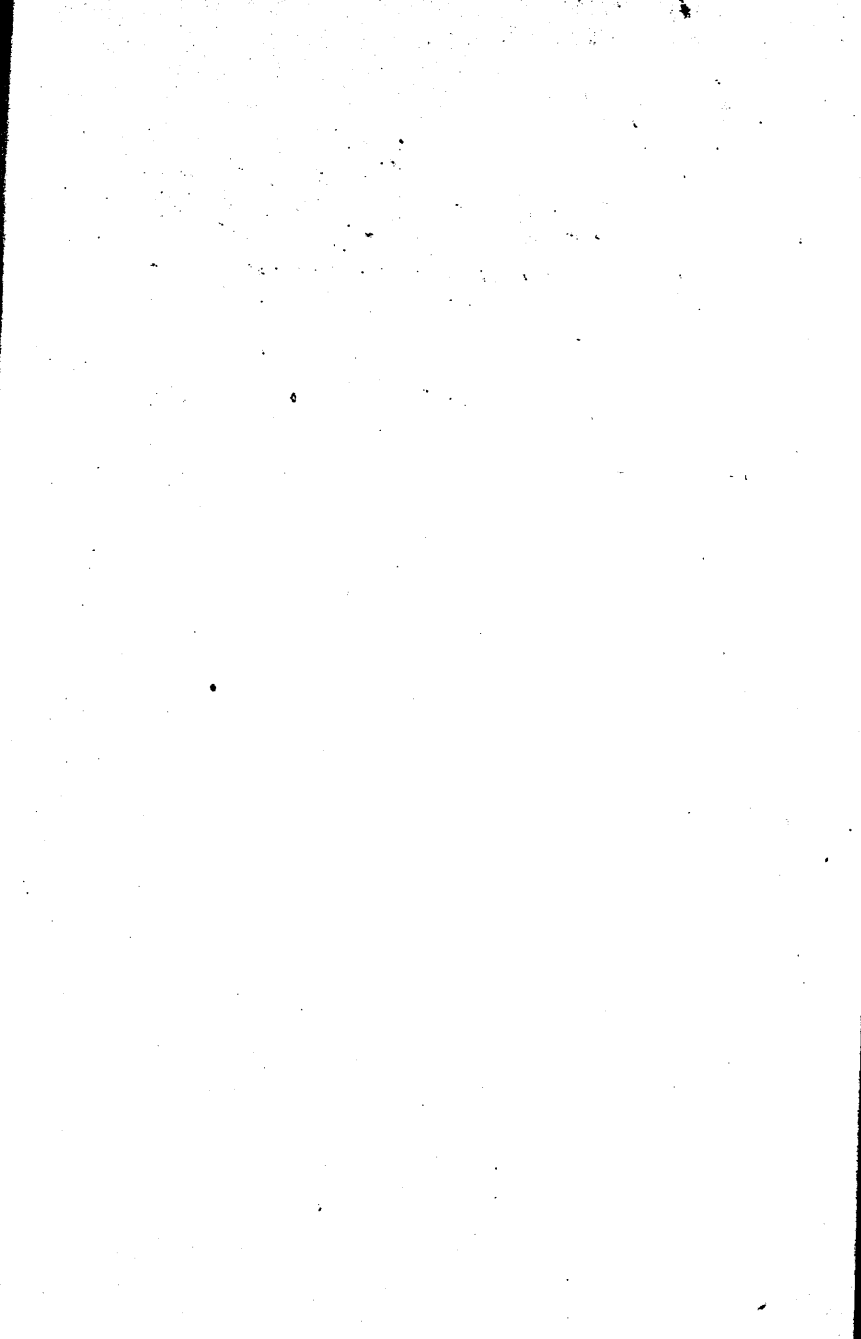
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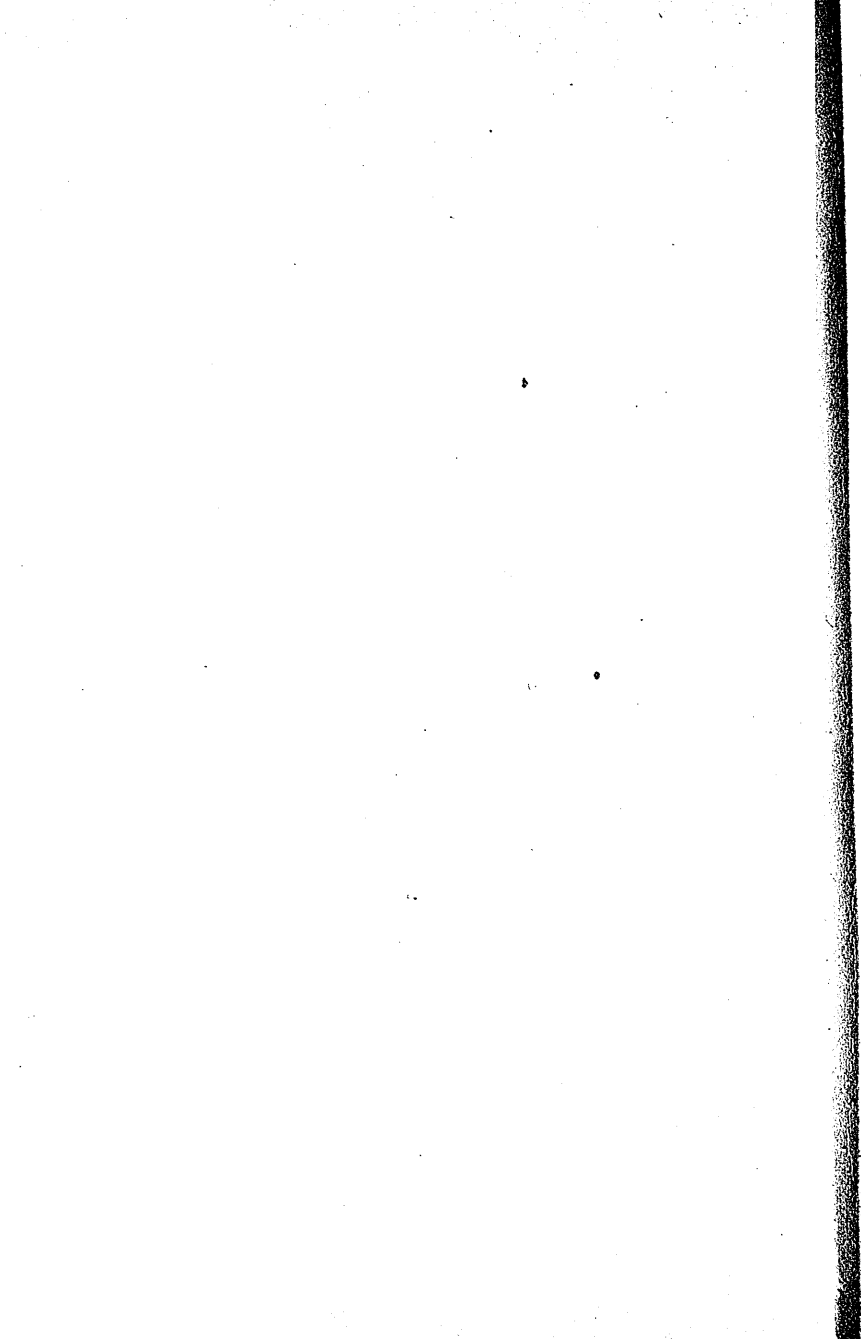


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yours sincerely,
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TOM DOBSON

A CHAMPION OF THE OUTCASTES

BY

NICOL MACNICOL, M.A., D.LITT.

AUTHOR OF

'INDIAN THEISM,' 'PSALMS OF MARATHA SAINTS,'

'THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA,' ETC.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
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TO
JOANNA AND MARY DOBSON
TO HELP THEM TO KNOW
WHAT A FATHER THEY HAD AND HAVE

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P R E F A C E

THIS biography has not been written merely as a tribute such as I, in common with all Mr. Dobson's colleagues in Poona and Jalna, desire to pay to one to whom his friends owe a debt for comradeship and inspiration that will remain to the end. In addition to the private satisfaction that comes from making his quality known to a wider circle there is the hope—which even to Tom Dobson himself might justify its publication—that this book may be a means to widen and deepen interest in the people to whom he gave himself so generously as well as in others in India in like case to theirs, and that so it may do something to hasten the day of their deliverance. India presents many difficult problems to the world and especially to the Christian Church. There is none so difficult, none that lies so heavy on the hearts of her own greatest-hearted sons or that should lie so heavy on the heart of the Christian within her borders as that of the emancipation of

her outcastes. It is for their sake—as Tom Dobson would have wished—rather than for the sake of this man who championed their cause with such self-renouncing passion, that this book is written and that Mr. Livingstone has included it in his series.

To all who have helped in the task of writing the book I desire to return grateful thanks. Among others I would name with special gratitude Rev. W. E. Wilkie Brown of Jalna, who has supplied a moving account of his friend's death and has furnished other valuable material. But my debt is greatest to those with whom he was in constant correspondence, to Mrs. Dobson first of all, and to Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wilson. What a place letters to and from his friends had in Tom Dobson's life will be apparent to every reader of this book. With this key he unlocked his heart, and to those, accordingly, who have generously allowed me to make use of the letters that do so much to enrich this narrative I make grateful acknowledgment.

N. MACNICOL.

EDINBURGH,
August 1924.

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I

EARLY YEARS: GALLOWAY AND GLASGOW

Grey, recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,
Standing-stones on the vacant wine-red moor,
Hills of sheep, and the homes of the silent vanished
races,
And winds, austere and pure.

R. L. STEVENSON.

How Tom Dobson would have laughed if he had been told that he would have a place in a gallery of 'Master Missionaries.' He was never a man to thrust himself to the front when honours were being distributed. If there were tasks of difficulty or danger to do then the gravitation of character and capacity and strength bore him inevitably to the front line. In the day of battle his place was with the vanguard, and men looked to him instinctively for leadership. But when, afterwards, rewards were being handed out, he would have vanished.

Doing things, not talking about them, was his *métier*.

Nor did he correspond to the conventional idea of the missionary : he was not cut to a pattern by the discipline and training of University and Theological College. Other disciplines, certainly not less rigorous, had gone to his making, and they were not such as to cause the man to be submerged in the professional person. He was a master by strength of character and power of personality ; he was a missionary by reason of his faith in God and his great capacity for love. He was a man worthy to be known because of those personal qualities that made him stand out as notable among his fellows, and that bound them to him with affection and deep gratitude.

He was worthy to be known likewise because he was given, under the guidance of God, a task of exceptional difficulty and significance, and because he discharged it, in the short time granted to him, in such a

fashion that the record of his missionary service may well prove a pattern and an inspiration to those who have like problems to solve. To help the outcastes of India 'up from slavery' is a task of tremendous difficulty that has been set to the hand of the Christian Church. Tom Dobson saw with clear vision the road to their emancipation. He knew it to be a long and difficult road, but the prospect did not daunt him. It did not daunt him because he possessed not only vision but purpose. He led the way onward with unswerving resolution, never beguiled, as too many before him had been, into easy by-paths. By reason of these qualities of manhood in him and by reason of the 'shining and courageous virtue, faith' that sustained him, he was able to show the way in this task of emancipation. Others—in India and in other lands—have had similar qualities, no doubt, and their lives teach a similar lesson, but the message of his life is so clear and so urgent that it seems right that the story that contains it

should be told. How best to 'give deliverance to the captives,' to restore their manhood to those who have been defrauded of it, is by no means an easy thing to discover. In India the wrong done to the outcastes is so ancient, and their bondage lies so heavy upon them, that it will require long patience and deep wisdom to achieve their emancipation. Non-Christian Indians—under such leaders as Mahātmā Gandhi—have begun to feel the call of this duty. Christians must feel it, even across half the world. How one Christian felt it and responded to it, what strength of mind and heart he gave to its fulfilment, setting up 'a mark of everlasting light, above the howling senses' ebb and flow'—that is the story of Tom Dobson that we have here to tell.

He was born in the village of Tongland, two and a half miles from Kirkcudbright, on 14th August 1878. Thus he was a native of Galloway, a region of Scotland associated, more perhaps than any other

of the land, with her struggles for freedom, whether political or religious. Names, romantic and heroic, of martyrs and of 'bonny fighters' haunt its wine-red moors. It is the land of the fierce House of Douglas, king-makers and keepers of the Marches. Paul Jones went out from it an exile to fight against his country for American independence. To it 'young Lochinvar' bore home his bride. Robert Louis Stevenson, all the way from Samoa, could still hear how in Galloway 'about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying.' Peden the prophet was minister of New Luce. John Welsh, John Knox's son-in-law, was minister of Kirkcudbright. Lag and Claverhouse hunted their prey across these moors. A few miles from Tongland down by the shores of the Solway is Anwoth, which had once as its minister 'a little fair man' who preached to his people of 'the loveliness of Christ.' Tom left Tongland at the age of nine. In the case of many boys of that age in the village it may have been the case that

they heard little of such heroes of the past as these. But in the home where this boy was growing up we can be quite sure that it was not so. No one who saw his father's gentle, thoughtful face in later years can doubt that in his house such names would be known and such stories told.

For Tom Dobson was not only born in a part of Scotland that had bred strong men and true men in old days ; he was born in a home where God was honoured, and His truth obeyed. We shall see from his relation to his son in later years, and from his son's own testimony, what manner of man his father was. One strong conviction that Tom inherited was that of the evil wrought by strong drink. His father, who was by trade a baker, had proved the strength and sincerity of his temperance principles by surrendering his partnership in a prosperous business rather than be false to them. His mother belonged to the Evangelical Union Church in Langholm in Dumfriesshire—a Church, that is to say,

whose members had separated themselves from the Secession Church and borne witness to the freedom and universality of the Gospel as these truths were maintained by Dr. James Morison. Such were some of the convictions that were carried over into the life of their son from his father and mother. They were not 'half-believers of a casual creed': what they professed was their own possession, strongly held. And this characteristic of his parents was from first to last a characteristic of their son.

But the boy at Tongland was little different, as far as we know, from other boys of the village. He robbed apple-trees as other boys did, but one thing that is told of him in this connection gives sign of the man that was to be. He was always so far to the front in these forays that the stones thrown to bring the apples down used to descend upon his head, and the consequent wounds and bruises betrayed, when he came home, what mischief he had been engaged upon. He was always, all his life long, sure to be

in the front line of danger and of adventure. Another occupation of these early years for him as for most boys was, we may be sure, bird-nesting, but in the case of this family of boys, it was bird-nesting with a difference. From the gentle father they had learned one lesson of gentleness, namely to look upon the birds' eggs as sacred. 'You know,' says Tom in a letter from India many years afterwards, 'what a family of boys there are of us, yet never one of us was a bird-nest harrier, and yet we were in the midst of boys who gathered eggs, and in the midst of plenty of nests that we knew as much about as any other boys did. Our Dad used upon occasion to say something to us that made us think.' That was enough—'he made us think.' And on going on to speak of the methods his father used to control half a dozen high-spirited and healthy boys, he adds, 'When we had a beating from our father it was something extraordinary, and a very solemn ceremony, I can assure you. And half of its beneficial

effect lay in the fact that it was a thing of such seldom occurrence.'

In 1887 the family moved to Glasgow. One could know little of Tom Dobson's nature if one did not realise that it was the country and its scenes and scents that possessed his heart, and no city of men. The open sky and the sea and the songs of birds and the snell air of the hills—when he was out among these with his friends all the joyousness of his nature found utterance. That we shall discover more and more as we come to know him. And yet it is true at the same time that Glasgow contributed greatly to make him what he was, and he was always a proud and loyal son of the great-hearted Scottish city. There is an eagerness in the nature of these people in the West, an interest in life and its problems which is stimulating to every one who comes within its contagion. And Tom Dobson was singularly fortunate in coming, as he grew older and his mind awakened, within the orbit of a group of

men and women who were alive to much of the interest and beauty of the world and of human life, who felt its tragedy and realised its problems, and who reached forth, behind these facts of good and ill, to God and His love, as the abiding and controlling things.

These people were no 'high-brows.' Most of them—as was the case with Tom himself—had no more 'education' than that which the 'Board Schools' of Glasgow furnished. He left school at the age of fourteen or earlier, and for a while served as a messenger boy until he was old enough to begin his apprenticeship to the trade of printer in the Celtic Press. But though his education, as far as the State was concerned, ended when he left the Board School, his real education in mind and heart and in all the faculties of his nature was by no means ended. There were for some years longer evening classes that he attended in Woodside School in Woodlands Road, and there was the culture, richer and deeper, and continuing, we may say, all his

life long, that he obtained through the fellowship and stimulus of friends whom he found chiefly in the Church with which his father and mother had associated themselves on their arrival in Glasgow. This was Montrose Street Evangelical Union or Congregational Church.

We have seen that Tom's mother was a member of a congregation in Langholm that had followed Dr. James Morison when he was driven forth from the United Secession Church for testifying, as the inscription on the monument over his grave declares, 'that Jesus died for the sins of all men without distinction or exception.' He was not a high enough Calvinist for these stern seceders. Dr. Morison lived, as the inscription goes on to claim, 'to see his views of divine truth almost universally accepted in his native land, and his ministry, begun under much obloquy, was finished amid the love and esteem of all classes of his countrymen.' The Montrose Street Church was one of the little group of congregations that

turned from the harsh doctrine of an older day to this more generous conception of the love of God. One would expect that the men and women drawn together by such a faith would have a richer and more joyous view of life, than those possessed who remained within the straiter sect. Love—a word somewhat feared in the austere theology of Scotland hitherto—came to its own in this little sect. They were not afraid to affirm in the declaration of their belief that that word sums up at once God's character and man's duty. Thus one would expect that the hearts united in that profession would glow with a heightened warmth of affection and of ardour, and something of that kind we discover in the atmosphere of the Montrose Street Evangelical Union Church.

While Tom was in his teens a deepened sense of earnestness came to his life. It was always his nature to weigh carefully the rights and wrongs of things in the scales of conscience ; he never lived easily or on

the surface. One can realise that there might well have been a danger of his religion growing grim and morbid. But if there was a time when this seemed likely to happen, it was only, we may conjecture, because deepening conviction was coming to him and the purpose of life was becoming more clear. There was seriousness, indeed, but no narrowness or gloom, in his theology, and he believed with no reservations, as his Church declared, that God is love. It is noteworthy that he repeatedly testifies in letters to his friends to his debt to George MacDonald, the Scottish novelist and poet and theologian. It will be remembered how this writer made his novels the vehicle of a broader and more mystical religion than was commonly taught in the Presbyterian pulpit. One of his books, rather fully charged with instruction, is *Donal Grant*, and of it Tom writes from India to a friend who had asked his opinion of it—'It was part of my theological education. I did not enjoy it as a story, if I remember

rightly, but I read it with great relief, because of some of the views that were advanced therein.' 'With great relief'—we see him emerging from the shadows into the cloudless splendour of an assurance of the divine love, wide as the universe of men.

Writing later in life and looking back, he remembers how, in contrast with all the varieties of amusement that the newer generation sought, to him and to his friends there were two main occupations that engrossed their leisure time, the work of their Church and the study of books. The Montrose Street Church *Messenger*—a monthly bulletin of the congregation's activities—gives evidence of how much the former meant to him. At this time began his connection with the Literary Society of his Church, a connection that was maintained to the very end of his life. When he went to India the Society made him an honorary member, and he was able, even when most overwhelmed with responsibility, to send them occasional papers

describing aspects of the problems that India presents. The ties of affection that the Society and its interests helped to knit neither time nor distance could break.

Another means of fellowship besides that which books supplied was nature and the open road. It is not surprising to find Tom issuing in the *Messenger* in April 1902 a call to the young people of the Church to form a Rambling Club, and presently it was formed with him as its President. These were means by which he was enriching his spirit, and furnishing his mind, but it would not have been like him to spend his time in taking and to forget the duty of giving. The Church had a 'Mission District' for which it was responsible, and we find him not only himself working among the people there, but seeking to awaken a greater sense in the congregation of their duty to the poor and the unhappy. Along with some others of a like spirit he started a Boys' Club for working boys. Later on he worked in the squalid region of

'Rotten Row' and saw with his own eyes the horrors of Glasgow's poverty and misery and degradation. These things lay heavy upon his heart. When he left Glasgow and took the road to India it was not because he failed to realise the urgency and the agony of home problems. The burden of them indeed helped to make him an advanced Radical in his political views and a Socialist. But he went to India because he knew that the same tasks needed to be done there as in Scotland, and because he knew that there would be fewer in India to do them. Shortly before he set sail he wrote to a friend of his feelings in regard to the problem that poverty in such a city as Glasgow presents. 'Never while I live,' he says, 'will I get out of my mind all that is in our city slums—and my knowledge is not deep or comprehensive nor my acquaintance very close—and I do not think of myself now as leaving all that I've tried to do unfinished. But am I fit? I've felt—so many times—like a big boy playing

with a problem and a condition of things which was beyond his power of mind, which his clumsy handling would never help to alter. Maybe I'll come back . . . with something of the mind of a man.'

One number of the *Messenger* contains a sketch which describes finely and feelingly the horrors of a Saturday night in Glasgow. It concludes with three verses of a poem by Archdeacon Trench of which he was always particularly fond, and which may be taken as summing up his faith in the divine love without which the sorrow of the world would have been an intolerable burden. Whether in Glasgow or in India there was always above him, he knew, this 'canopy of love.'

I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet,
In lane, highway or open street,

That he and we and all men move
Under a canopy of love
As broad as the blue sky above;

That doubt and trouble, fear and pain
And anguish, all are shadows vain;
And death itself shall not remain.

That was the tune to which his whole life was set and already his heart had begun to sing it.

There was one other conviction that came to him at this time and that henceforward was one of the deepest and most significant factors, after his religious faith, in determining the manner and direction of his life. He became a vegetarian. Here, as in much else, we find evidence of the influence of the Literary Society of the Church. What produced the mental ferment, the searching and weighing of cause and consequence, of right and duty from which came the conviction that to kill animals for the satisfaction of our appetites is wrong, was a lecture by one of the young men of the congregation on the ethics of diet. As Tom said of his father in the matter of bird-nesting, so he might have said of this friend now—'he made us think.' Tom was never one, whether in early youth or in later days, to take a course on impulse, to resolve and then abandon his resolve. On this occasion

it was not until for twelve months he had thought the matter out in all its bearings that one day he came home to tell his family that henceforward he could eat no flesh. And having seen what appeared to him to be the right way in this matter he never from that day on turned aside. It was not an easy purpose to carry out either in his home then or in the relations of after life, but the reason that a thing was not easy was never a final or convincing reason with Tom Dobson. There are various reasons that make men vegetarians, whether in Scotland or in India, as he was to find in later years, but the reason that commanded him in this as in much else was the supreme reason of love and compassion. He was not the only one in the Church to whom at this time it became clear that the love upon which their religion was based must have vegetarianism as one of its consequences. Among these were his mother, who soon followed her son's leading in this matter, and a little later his father. In the

group of friends so closely bound together in affection and loyalty this common conviction was a new bond of union. The young man who took this step in obedience to the leading of his reason and his conscience gave clear evidence in doing so that he was already possessed of unusual steadfastness of purpose and sincerity.

Thus at the age of twenty we see a strong character already being formed in him and some characteristic ideas and convictions already laying hold of him. When we find him vehemently opposing a proposal made by some members of the Church that the Mission carried on in the Gorbals district should be given up because it was expensive and brought few additions to the membership of the Church, and asking these faint-hearts what price they put upon a human soul, we recognise that we have here already the Tom Dobson that was to be. And another story told of him at this time is equally typical of the silent strength that was always his. A horse and van had

bolted in Bath Street when he, coming home from his work, saw the danger that threatened the children playing near and that would become much more serious if the horse turned, as it seemed about to do, into the crowded Sauchiehall Street. Prompt in action, as he always was, he dashed at it and seized and stopped it: but in doing so the calf of his leg was badly torn. In spite of this he walked home and said nothing to any one. It was only when he was compelled by the pain and loss of blood to retire from the supper-table that his injury was discovered, the doctor called in and the wound sewed up. Such modesty and strength always were his. It never seemed to be difficult for him to keep silence, and especially to keep silence about his own troubles or his own achievements. Doing things was ever what he was best at, not talking about what he had done.

At the same time his strength of character and conviction impelled him, for all his modesty, to leadership when things had

to be done. For that reason, young as he was, he was already making his mark in his Trade Union. He was now, his apprenticeship completed, employed in Tomlinson's Printing Office in Partick, and had begun to take some part in Labour politics. Many years afterwards, looking back, he suggests that, had he not gone to India, he might have given himself to this method of service of his fellows. He would certainly never have been content to trudge along an uninspired path. There was a fire within him that burned with pity for men's distress and with passion for their saving. But the pity and the passion were now dedicated to higher ends than those that politics pursues. He was resolved to follow Christ's way of deliverance for men and it proved to be a way, under divine guidance, that led him forth from Glasgow to India.

II

POONA : 1903-1908

I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth,
And every bird and every beast
Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

THE first stage in Tom Dobson's life was closing. He was fully equipped with knowledge of his trade as a compositor and printer ; he had acquired character and strength, and a clear vision had come to him as to the meaning and purpose of his life. It remained to determine where he was to put his life to usury, what field of service was to claim him. The immediate instrument of this decision was an advertisement in a Y.M.C.A. magazine seeking the services of a manager for a Printing Press in Poona, in connection with the Scottish Mission Industries Company. This

Company had recently been formed for the purpose of co-operating on business lines with the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Free Church of Scotland in its work in India, and had taken over two printing presses already in existence at Ajmer and Poona, with a view to making more effective use of them for the purposes for which they had originally been established. The object of this new Company was declared to be 'the establishing and developing of the industrial element of their (*i.e.* the United Free Church of Scotland's) operations with a view to providing employment for converts, famine orphans, and other adherents of the Mission, and helping such to become independent and self-supporting.' In offering himself for this work Tom Dobson was setting foot upon a road that became harder and harder as he went on. To help men 'to become independent and self-supporting' is extraordinarily difficult anywhere, but especially in a land like India. No doubt he was far from fully realising the

difficulty, but he had his hesitations. He speaks in a letter of the fears that visited him, but, he adds—and here the man he always was speaks to us—‘ Who can afford to let his fears govern him ? ’ It was hard to leave his friends and to leave the problems he had begun to set his hand to, but, he says, ‘ I weighed that up and it seemed as though I’d be of most use in India.’ That was for him decisive, and it was arranged that in September 1903 he should set sail from London.

But he did not set sail in September, for in the very week appointed for his departure his mother died. She died, he says, ‘ just as a tired labourer might fall into a restful sleep.’ Tom Dobson was peculiarly fortunate in the happiness of his home and in the affection of his parents. This blow, coming as it did when so many ties were breaking, was a specially sore one. It was made easier to bear by the sympathy and affection, such as he always prized so much, that his friends gave him. When, at the

beginning of October, he set out for London he wrote to one of these true comrades, ' There has never been a richer man to sail from the old country than I, and never a boat more heavily freighted than the old *Britannia* will be this time.' By the end of that month he was in Poona : and Poona for nearly seventeen years was the place of his service.

This city is situated about eighty miles south-east of Bombay, and has played and plays still a great part in the history of India. Standing on the dry, hot uplands of the Deccan, sixty miles from the sea, it neither possesses the commercial importance of the great seaport, nor yet that city's moist and enervating climate. Its situation and its history have made it a centre where gather proud memories of the past and dreams—sometimes wild dreams—of the future. The Marāthas, whose capital Poona is, had always proved themselves a virile people, tillers of the soil, well able on occasion to exchange the ploughshare for

the sword. The great Marātha hero, Shivaji, a contemporary of Oliver Cromwell, established himself for a brief period as a monarch able to defy the power of the Emperor Aurungzebe, and made the name of Marātha feared as far as the city of Calcutta. Later, when the line he founded grew enervated by luxury and ease, a new dynasty grasped the government, that of the Peshwas, as they were called, the Brāhman ministers of the Marātha kingdom. It is sometimes claimed that it was from the Marāthas, and not from the Moguls, that the rule of India was finally wrested by British arms. Certainly Marātha Brāhman leadership along with the warlike qualities of the Marātha soldiery—qualities proved anew in the Great War on the battlefields of Mesopotamia—made a combination formidable enough to be treated with respect by the British power. It was fortunate that on the battlefield of Assaye the British General was one so distinguished as Arthur Wellesley.

When Tom Dobson arrived in Poona he found himself in a city transformed, as a result of three-quarters of a century of peaceful British rule, into a centre of learning and of intellectual ambition. The flower of the Marātha Brāhman youth crowded into its Colleges. It is possible, indeed, to claim that this city of 130,000 inhabitants has exercised a greater influence in proportion to its size than any other city in India, that it is situated among the headwaters of those streams of new life and new ambition that, some of them turbid enough, have for a generation past been flowing across India. One group in especial, the Chitpawan Brāhmans, to whom the Peshwas had belonged, have shown themselves to be possessed of exceptional qualities of leadership. Of these at the close of 1903 was, for example, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the most powerful popular leader of recent times in India until his star waned before that of Mahātmā Gandhi. Of them also was Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the ablest statesman,

perhaps, that India has yet produced. Other names of distinguished members of this remarkable company, each one a notable formative influence in the new nation that was arising, are Mahadev Govind Ranade, the leader in social and religious reform, Pandita Ramabai, a Christian woman possessed of apostolic qualities of ardour and inspiration, and Narayan Vaman Tilak, also a Christian and the most outstanding poet of recent times in the Marātha country. These Chitpawans have not only great intellectual gifts—that is nothing uncommon in any province of India—but gifts of initiative and energy and practical statesmanship that are more rare among their countrymen, and that are peculiarly needed in the circumstances of to-day.

These qualities are seen in the institutions that they have built up in Poona, such as the Fergusson College, the Servants of India Society, and the Seva Sadan. With these Tom Dobson soon had opportunities of

making acquaintance, as well as with the men and women who were their makers. Their significance to us here lies in the indications that their existence gives of the character of the *milieu* into which he came and in the midst of which the greater part of his Indian life was spent. The presence in the community of men of such quality and capacity inevitably made Poona a centre of much importance in the national movement that has arisen in recent years in India. During the whole period of his residence in Poona there was evident throughout the land a tide of discontent and of desire continuously making, with increasing strength and turbulence, towards the demand for liberation from foreign dominance, and its direction and its movements were strongly evidenced in the public life of the city. Exasperated Englishmen—their temper and their judgment infected by the heat of the land—had been known to declare that if only half a dozen Poona Brāhmans

were hanged, tranquillity would reign once more.

During the whole of this time Bal Gangadhar Tilak—except while he was serving his six years' term of imprisonment in Rangoon—was, up till his death in 1920, the dominating figure in the politics not only of Poona but of the whole of India. Two years after Dobson's arrival G. K. Gokhale founded his Servants of India Society, which was destined to train and send forth a stream of workers for their country in the field of politics and of social service. These, and others like them, were men who were not only talkers, as so many in India are so often charged with being, but men of action, able to translate their words into acts and to 'put things across.' There was enough of frothy talk among many even of them—perhaps as a result of their having for so long been allowed no opportunity of exercising freely in the art of government any other organ than the tongue—to make Tom Dobson, with his

steadfast strenuous silent nature, hewn from Scottish rock, often impatient enough of their futility. But there were others, not a few, as strong, as far-seeing, as patient and purposeful as the makers of his own nation in the past had been. These too he came to know, and was not slow to admire.

These movements of purpose and these personalities indicate the background against which we have to set the life and activities of Tom Dobson during the years that followed his arrival in October 1903. His own immediate task must have seemed to him humble enough when he first looked upon the Printing Press of which he had come so far to take charge. We have no record of whether his heart sank within him, and he was not a man to betray his disappointment. The missionaries at Poona at all events rejoiced greatly at his coming, and handed over to him with much relief the management of a department of their work which they were quite unfitted to supervise.

The Orphanage Press was so named because of its relation to a Boys' Orphanage established by Rev. John Small in consequence of the famines of 1876-78. These famines cast large numbers of children, deserted or orphaned of their parents and left to die, upon the care of missionary and other philanthropic institutions. It was not enough to rescue them from starvation and feed them ; they had to be educated and put in the way of making a decent living. Thus it came about that in 1880 Mr. Small established a Printing Press with a view to providing a means of teaching these boys a respectable trade and at the same time of serving the ends of the Mission by producing good literature. A difficulty, however, that came in the way of many such excellent schemes was that the missionary who was placed in charge of a farm or a printing press or a carpenter's shop was not always himself an expert at the business. One might even be, as Mr. John Small was described by Principal Fairbairn

of Mansfield College, a St. John of the Mission field, and yet not have the real capacity for the management of such an institution that Mr. Small possessed. For twenty years he carried on the Press, giving to it such time as he could spare from the busy labours of evangelism. When he died in 1899 the Press was still doing good work, but it was becoming obvious that it must do better work if it was to maintain itself in existence and prove, as it ought to prove, that the Christian religion made men good workmen and aimed at nothing less than the best. One by one similar institutions to this Orphanage Press all over the country were submerged through failure to prove equal to higher demands for efficiency. Few of them had ever been taken seriously enough by the Missionary Societies. Their record was summed up in the words of an experienced missionary after he had listened at a Conference to one tale after another of failure. He said that the stories that missionaries had to tell of the progress and

the final end of such institutions reminded him of Josh Billings' resolve always to keep out of debt even if he had to borrow money to do it. Most of these institutions were a financial burden to the Missions, and of little service in training skilled workmen or in doing useful work.

The Orphanage Press in Poona had a worthier record in these respects than many, but the time had come when better things needed to be done. It was then that the Scottish Mission Industries Company, largely through the initiative of Rev. J. Anderson Brown, a missionary of the United Free Church in Rajputana, was established, and a new era began for the Mission Presses in Ajmer and Poona.

One reason for the failure of industrial undertakings of this kind was that they were almost always starved. There was no capital behind them. It seemed wrong to use Mission funds for such purposes except in the most niggardly fashion. As

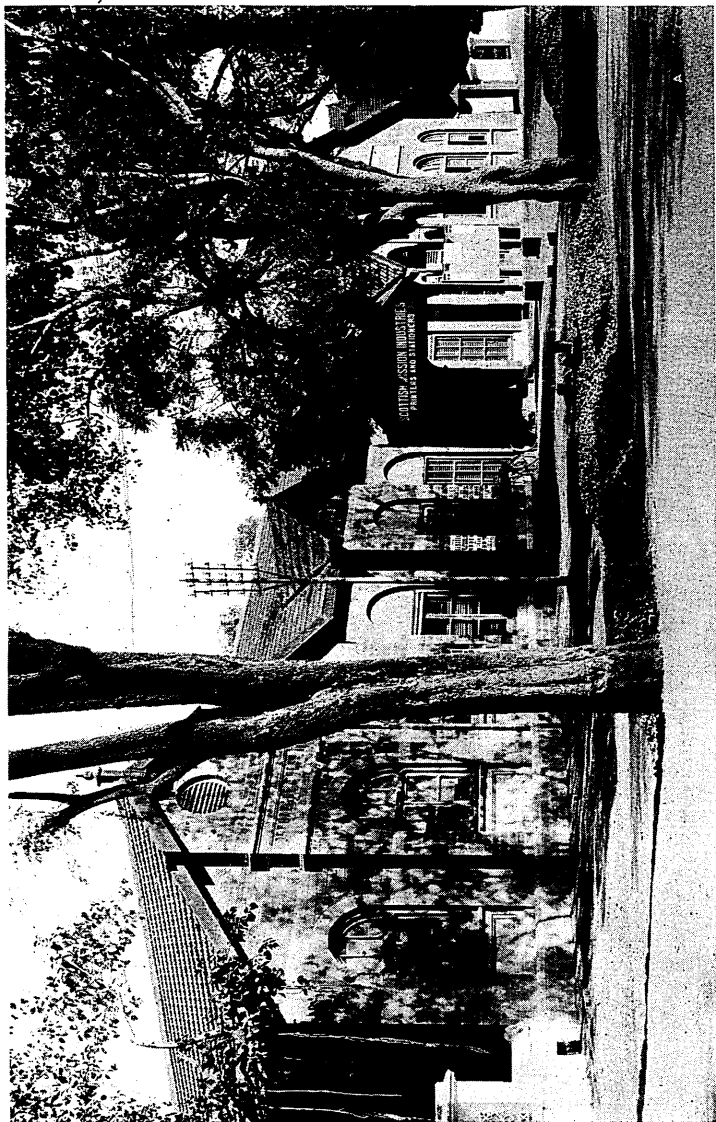
a consequence the only generous expenditure that was incurred was of the patience and often the health of missionaries who had this business to manage in the spare fragments of their time. But more serious even than their lack of time to attend to the business was their lack of the necessary training and capacity. A compositor or printer is a highly skilled workman, and to place the control and guidance of such work under one with nothing but the most casual knowledge of it was to invite failure. The Scottish Mission Industries Company was established for the purpose of turning such failure into success, and for the purpose—at the same time and especially—while training skilled workmen, of making good men. It was to be closely allied with the missionary work that the Church was carrying on, and yet to be wholly independent. The workers in the Company's service were no longer to be dependents of the Mission ; they were to be treated according to the work they did, and the ability they

showed, and to be thus enabled, as the prospectus of the Company declared, 'to become independent and self-supporting.'

These were the aims that the Scottish Mission Industries Company had set before it, and now Tom Dobson had come to carry them into effect in Poona. They were fortunate in their choice of such a pioneer, one who could realise the real significance of the task and who was not to be daunted by its difficulty. There was much to daunt any one less stout-hearted, coming from Tomlinson's works in Partick to the hovel—it was scarcely more—that housed the Orphanage Press in Poona. He had authority to erect new buildings, but meantime he had to humble his spirit to this. He had everything to do from the very beginning, and all that grew there was of his sowing and tending and watering. He let no complaint escape him, but a year later we have a glimpse of what was unuttered. 'When I came out,' he writes, 'it was thought we'd have a new building up in six months, but here we are

still after much woeful talk, arguing, studying of Cantonment laws and waste of foolscap, with our building only a bit above the plinth. At first the idea of carrying on the work of the old building for even six months was almost too much to be thought of calmly; but lo, necessity has said that I must e'en work away under such conditions for more than three times six months, and I have had to submit, and even begin to take all the inconveniences as a matter of course.'

One of the hard lessons of life and work in such a land as India is to learn on the one hand to be patient in face of the delays and disappointments that are inevitable there, to surrender the attempt, beyond what is possible, 'to hustle the East,' and to learn on the other hand never to acquiesce slothfully in a lowering of one's ideal and an easy acceptance of the second best. It was not long before Tom Dobson had to set himself to learn the first of these lessons, a hard one for his eager spirit. 'O for a



THE SCOTTISH MISSION INDUSTRIES COMPANY'S PRESS, POONA

mighty punch at the easy-goingness of India and its quiet customary way of doing things! I'd like to take a stick and "steir" the whole concern for five minutes, as vigorously as any old Scotch dame would "steir" the porridge.' In time, however, at the slow pace of the East, the buildings arose which were the outward indication of the steady continuous success of his work as manager of the business which he came out to take charge of. The Scottish Mission Industries Company's Press, and the shop associated with it, which sold stationery and all the furnishings of an office, were presently among the most dignified buildings of Poona, a resort of many also who wanted other things besides printed matter and ink and notepaper.

We have seen something of the atmosphere of Indian political ambition, the spirit new-awakened in so many breasts, in the presence of which this Scottish printer missionary went quietly about his task from day to day. There were other

aspects as well of his environment which we must have before us if we are to picture him as he went from his house to his place of business, intent always upon the worthiest fulfilment of his task. When he lifted his eyes to look about him—and he was never blind to the beauty of the world—he saw much to satisfy his hungry spirit. Poona stands at the junction of two rivers in a fair and well-watered plain bounded on one side by a ridge of stately hills. The bareness of the long dry hot months is relieved by an abundance of trees that border every road and that hold the city as one looks down upon it from above quite hidden in their foliage. Year by year when the rains come the marvel is repeated of the transformation, as though at the word of the world's re-creator, of a brown and barren desert to life and greenness. Even the hot weather has its beauty when the blazing sun looks down upon the blazing Gold Mohur blossoms, while what is called in that land the cold season has the faint

primrose of its evening skies. And always there are the wonderful clear nights of stars, with Orion walking high and with the Cross lifted to the south. These things spoke their message to Tom Dobson, stilling and strengthening his spirit many a time when harsh sounds and fierce heats and all in an Eastern land that comes to thwart and vex had brought strain and disquietude. We may be sure that his eyes marked their beauties and his heart took, as it had need to take, their comfort.

But there was not only about him the Indian spirit and the Indian scene : there were his own fellow-countrymen and with them also he had much to do. In the Press sometimes he had the great satisfaction of printing the Marāthi scriptures for the British and Foreign Bible Society, and sometimes in other similar ways he was able to take a direct share in conveying the message of God and of the love of God to the people of the land. But a large part of the income that maintained the Press and

encouraged the Directors of the Company in their good work, as well as of the opportunity that the Press was able to provide for men to obtain skill in their trade as printers and to win a livelihood for their families, was provided by work done for the large civil and military population, and for the offices of Government. For Poona is not only an important centre of Indian life and thought: it is also an important centre from which radiate the activities of the foreign administration. During the monsoon season the Governor of the Province has his seat there, and all the machinery of Government has to be gathered about him and to remain for four months until another migratory impulse impels a further flight to Mahableshwar or to Bombay. Regiments, too, British and Indian, are stationed at this centre, and Generals of various grades and sorts have their headquarters there. These circumstances have their interest for us in this narrative, for they brought grist to the Scottish Mission

Industries Company's mill and gave opportunities to the manager of coming into relation with, and serving, many different kinds of people. With British soldiers he was in continual contact, and many a time was able to help men who were lonely in barracks in a far land, with all the hideous temptations round them that a Cantonment Bazaar and the 'followers' of a British regiment in such a land provide. From the Governor's Aide-de-Camp to the humblest clerk in the Collector's Office, from the General commanding to the greenest 'recruity' in the last draft from England, all sorts of people with all sorts of needs betook themselves to him. It came to be a proverb in the Mission circle, 'When in doubt ask Dobson,' but the formula held for a far wider circle than his missionary friends. People soon found that he was different from others in similar positions that they had to deal with. They could trust him, and he would help them if he could. For that reason

many resorted to him and his burdens grew steadily heavier.

There was also another section of the community with which Tom Dobson's life in Poona was closely linked, more closely indeed than with any other. That is the section that included his fellow-missionaries and the Indian Christians. Poona is a headquarters station for a Government 'District' and a Government 'Division.' It is a convenient centre for operations in a wide area round about. For these reasons various Missions carrying on work in the surrounding country have their central institutions there and a considerable number of missionaries reside there. The Free Church of Scotland (now the United Free Church) was the first to occupy this field, where work was begun years ago. Later, the Church of Scotland entered, and the two Scottish Missions are now closely linked together in their common task. Among the Free Church missionaries of the past who made the fine tradition of Poona

and whose names are honoured were Dr. Murray Mitchell, an able scholar and student of Indian life and thought, and Mr. John Small, of whom we have already spoken. But foreign missionaries matter little compared with the Church that they exist to plant and nourish. Their names are written in the men and women whom they serve. The most significant fact in Poona from the point of view of Tom Dobson and his colleagues who had gone to India from Scotland for the ends of the Kingdom of God was the Indian Christian Church.

His first impression of that Church was only an impression, the effect on his mind of the contrast between the idolatry that is so open and manifest and that seems so gross in every Indian city and the quiet dignity and decency of Christian worship, but it has its value as such an impression. 'The native church,' he wrote, 'was like the light of hope in verity—the brightest thing I've seen since leaving home.' 'But,'

he adds, 'how small are the numbers of Christians compared with other sorts of folks!' He soon knew them at closer quarters and realised better both their virtues and their faults. The Poona Presbyterian congregation, when he made its acquaintance, represented not unworthily the Church that, having found Christ, is slowly finding itself in India. It seemed to him a small company, when he first saw it, to be the fruit of such long toil : it must, when later he came to know it better, have seemed singularly unequal to the high responsibility of piloting so great a people into the port of the Kingdom of God. And yet to his eyes and to the eye of faith such a company as that carried, in the deepest meaning of the words, India and her fortunes. There were among the three hundred members of the Church representatives of what had once been high caste as well as of what had been low caste Hindus, of Hindu society ranging from the Chitpawan Brāhman to the Pariah. There

were some whose ancestry went far back to the ' Beni-Israel '—the name by which they were still called—and who still retained much of the uprightness and strength of the great stock from which they came. The Christian lads who worked under him in the Press were mostly connected with this congregation ; so that in taking in hand the task of making them better workmen and better men he was shaping the stones and tempering the mortar for the building of the Church about which gathers the hope of India's future. In the most immediate fashion his hand held the trowel and swung the plumb-line, and he watched, scarcely perhaps knowing that he did so, while the foundations were being laid of the great temple yet to be, and while its walls in that corner of the land began to rise.

The greatest service that he could render to these young men consisted in his life and work from day to day among them and in the example that he gave them of a life of industry directed to the highest ends. He

preached to them day in and day out—not in words so much, for he was never a great talker—but in acts, what he calls later his ‘gospel of work.’ Thomas Carlyle had been one of those who exercised a deep and ineffaceable influence on his own early life. At the instance of one of his missionary colleagues he printed a selection of passages from *Sartor Resartus* for use as a text-book with Brāhman students. Sometimes he had charge of this class himself, and he tells in one letter how much he enjoyed expounding to them the chapters on ‘The Everlasting Yea.’ ‘I took full advantage,’ he says, ‘of a certain text by which Thomas Carlyle delivered those students into my hand—“Work thou in well-doing.” Now we in the West may not do it, but at least we’ve the idea. The only thing the Brāhman youth strives for is to get a B.A. degree and a seat in a Government office.’

But in the case of the Press the text-book for this lesson was not *Sartor Resartus*, and the lesson was not expounded to a docile

class of Brāhmans. His task was—and it was the same task for him to the last hour—to liberate these Christian lads from a heritage of sloth and shiftlessness, to give them in its stead the Christian conception of life as a mission, and work as a vocation, and love and service of others as its motive and its inspiration. This love he taught, but first he followed it himself. He was first at his post each morning and last to leave it at night. He placed no burden upon others that he was not ready to bear, many times multiplied, himself. What this Christian Socialist believed and tried to help others to believe was that work was no curse to man—whatever Jewish tradition might say ; that it was work done with a wrong aim that was sin. ‘ Gey near everybody thinks,’ he writes, dropping into Scots as was his way sometimes in his familiar letters, ‘ that work is something to make money by.’ To eradicate that idea from the minds of his fellow-workers in the Press, and perhaps even from the minds of

its proprietors in Edinburgh, was likely to be no easy undertaking. The Company aimed, its prospectus declared, at making a modest profit of 5 per cent., and their manager, to ensure that he did not lose sight of that goal, kept for a while a dog to which in humorous mood he gave the unusual name of 'Five per cent.' If such profits came—and they did come—it was not because they were set up as the chief end of this Press and its manager. They were a by-product while worthier and more enduring things were being sought.

Those who lived and worked beside him during these years remember many a hard battle that he fought alongside some of his lads, striving to reinforce the good in them and to set them free from the bondage of some evil taint of nature or some habit that was wrecking their lives. One must remember that a good many of those in his charge were derelicts whom it was hoped he might be able to make something of. Of one of these he writes, 'He is a sair

thocht pretty often, but on the whole he does well.' There were others, too, who were 'sair thochts' to him, for he did not take their faults and failures lightly. Even their domestic troubles were known to him, and he would be called in to bring back peace to divided and unhappy homes. It was not long before he became aware how many people in India, both Christians and non-Christians, were entangled hopelessly in the coils of indebtedness. Only a narrow margin separates many in that land from actual hunger and starvation, and such a condition of things tends perhaps to create and perpetuate improvidence and recklessness. The result is a frequent resort to the money-lender, and then that remorseless person has his opportunity. Tom Dobson was to make intimate acquaintance with this grim and powerful figure in days to come. Poona introduced him to him. 'If I were an autocrat,' he writes even at this early date, and he would have repeated it with emphasis in later years, 'I think

I would make money-lending a capital offence.'

It is impossible to do more than suggest a few of the varied occupations which this 'succourer of many' found time for, in spite of the continuous toil that his central task involved. We see him busy helping to organise a Society for the Protection of Children which sought to rally men and women of good will, whether Christian or non-Christian, for the help of helpless children. This movement had its root in an effort to bring to an end a hideous practice of 'marrying' little girls to certain Hindu gods. By this marriage, to which they might have been vowed before birth by ignorant mothers, they became 'brides of heaven,' and could have no human husbands. In non-Christian India for a woman to be unmarried too often means—so unnatural is that condition reckoned—that she follows the profession of a prostitute. To preserve little girls from condemnation to such a fate and to guard children from

other cruelties, no worse in India than in other lands, this Society was founded. He had, however, as he says, another Society for the Protection of Children of his own, already established. Along with a lady missionary and some of the Press workers he was carrying on a class in the Bazaar for the untamed little coolie boys who made a precarious living by carrying parcels and 'running messages.' They were a lively crew, and their liveliness as well as their youth appealed to him. The Y.M.C.A. was another institution that found in him always a warm friend. At this early date its work was mainly among one section of the community, hard indeed to help but greatly needing to be helped. These were the Eurasians or, as they are now usually called, Anglo-Indians. Their position between two races, exposed to the slights of both, enervated by the climate of the land in which they have to live, exposed to its temptations and breathing its moral atmosphere, gives them little opportunity of growing up

in strength and contentment. What they may be even in such adverse conditions, not a few noble members of the community have proved. Many, alas, as Tom Dobson found, are unstable in will, ill-educated, undisciplined. In one of his letters he describes with quiet humour a meeting of a Bible class for such young men. The subject was the marriage at Cana, and most of the time, he says, was occupied by them in discussing whether the water became wine when it was poured into the jars or when it was poured out. Their minds had never been exercised in anything but the routine of a Government office. Such were some of the ways in which with much patient continuance he sought to come near to and to help any class of people who needed friendship and whom he could in any way, however humble, befriend.

There is yet another class among the residents of Poona whom it is a main purpose of the Mission to guide into a deeper apprehension of truth and especially

of the truth as it is in Jesus. This is the intellectual class of non-Christian India, those educated in English, students either of the present or of the past in the Colleges that have so large a place in the life of the city. Tom Dobson was not himself 'College-bred,' but by reading and thought and study he had made himself fully qualified to take his place in their discussions even among men as intellectually nimble as the Poona Brāhmans. When he first arrived his missionary colleagues found that this layman who had never been within the gates of any university had read and mastered Principal Fairbairn's *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, a massive work that had recently been welcomed by students of religion. Tom Dobson was ever one who sought to reach to the principles upon which life and faith were based. Thus he was in no wise in an alien atmosphere when he went along with his missionary friends to search, and to provoke others to search, for a truth to live by and a God to trust.

Further he had the advantage of possessing one point of contact with the Brāhmans of the city, which his colleagues did not possess. He was, as we have seen, a vegetarian. This fact, when it came to be known in regard to him, proved at once an avenue of access which served him in good stead in winning a hearing for his Christian message. Thus in 1905 he was formally invited by some leading citizens to address a public meeting in the city on the subject of vegetarianism.

We should do little justice to Tom Dobson's deepest convictions and fail altogether to present him as the man he was if we passed lightly by his vegetarianism as though it mattered little. To him it mattered very greatly, and he rejoiced when the opportunity came to him of testifying on the subject not only to a large and representative audience of leading Hindus, already vegetarians themselves, though made so mainly by custom and tradition, and with little clear thinking

behind their practice, but also to those who were perhaps the only flesh-eaters there, his two missionary colleagues. In that audience he tells us, 'there were "reformers" and "orthodox" men, students who study the most up-to-date science at the college and who yet believe when at home that an eclipse takes place when the earth is going to swallow the sun. There were men—the majority—who had never tasted flesh, some who thought they ought to in order to come into the front rank of civilisation ; and some who were flesh-eaters. In all there were well over 200 gathered into the little Hall.' He tells a friend in a letter what line of argument he followed. 'I tried to show,' he says, 'that the vegetarian movement in the West was a strong movement, that it was growing. I showed its aims and principles, and how these had developed, and tried to give to the Brāhmins there, by recounting many of our common arguments, some reasons, outside of their own caste and religious require-

ments, why they should hold fast to their old customs in the matter of diet in the face of Western innovations. . . . Further, I tried to show how that the spirit of Christ was the strength and authority of the humane side of our principles, so to call them ; and it did not appear to me that in Buddhism or Brāhmanism we could find the true restraining motive or the highest principles ! I condemned them because they set some beasts up as of more value than many classes of men, and they listened patiently ! Lastly, I told them what I believed to be true—that if they took to flesh-eating they would sink mentally and physically and go down low in the scale of nations—told them that their true elevation would come through love expressed to all.’

That was straight talk, and by the road of vegetarianism he found a way for the spirit and the message of Christ. It was plain to see that this man was a vegetarian because he was a Christian, and no one in

his audience could on this occasion turn his back on Christianity on the plea that it makes the Christian less compassionate to all living creatures than Hinduism makes the Hindu. It was no doubt a disappointment to Tom Dobson that he did not obtain from among his European friends any converts to the humane belief and practice that he followed. His friends often adjusted themselves to his manner of life when they lived along with him, and they were glad to do so partly because of a real sympathy with his views, partly because they rejoiced in his fellowship. But such half-acceptance brought no satisfaction to him. His own convictions were sure to be accompanied by conduct in agreement with them. Once a course was clear to him he followed it, resolute and unswerving. This strength of purpose and sincerity constrained others to recognise and honour these qualities in him. He was convinced that in this matter he and those who held with him were in the van of Christian living. ' Good old cranks,'

he cries in one place, humorously apostrophising himself and his friends, 'march on and give our poor old world another lurch forward.'

Sometimes the arguments urged against his views by fellow-Christians who disagreed with him were strange enough. Vegetarianism was alleged to be a dangerous doctrine, likely to prove the harbinger of even more serious heresies. It leads, a missionary of another Church assured him, 'to false views on the Atonement.' On another occasion another profound theologian actually claimed that 'God was not a vegetarian, because he fed the prophet of old with meat by means of ravens.' As between Tom Dobson and his vegetarian friends on the one hand and such representatives of orthodoxy as these on the other, who can hesitate to conclude which were the sane people and which were the cranks?

In such labours as these, using to the full his physical strength, as well as his great

gifts of mind and heart, Tom Dobson's first five years of service went past. Though he had unusual physical strength there were evident indications that the continuous strain that he placed upon it was more than even his strength could stand. A very severe attack of fever gave him warning, and his friends were glad when it was found to be the best course to take in the interest of his work that he should return to Scotland without delay. His work at the Press during five years of incessant and strenuous toil had proved so successful that he had now a European assistant, and yet further advance appeared to be called for. Accordingly the Directors of the Company cabled to him to return immediately, that they might consult with him in regard to plans for extension, and on 7th November 1908 he sailed from Bombay in the *Marmora*.

III

POONA: 1908-1920

Sir JOHN MAFFEY of Mrs. Starr: 'She made a British mark on the heart of Tirah better than all the drums and tramlings of an army corps.' Let us rather say 'a Christian mark.'

WE have given a wholly erroneous impression of the personality of Tom Dobson if it has been made to appear as though because he had a commanding sense of duty he had not a spirit of joy, as though because he laboured mightily he was a kind of 'Robot,' a dehumanised automaton. He rejoiced with all his soul in the beauty of the world about him, and he had an eye to note its beauty where others remained blind. No human gift that he possessed stood him in better stead on many a dark and toilsome day than his abounding sense of humour. 'Werna my heart licht,' said a fellow Scot of an earlier day, 'I wad dee,' and many a

time he might have said the same. His heart was 'licht' : he could throw off his burdens and be glad. Perhaps that was one reason why children loved him. Let a single instance suffice to show how much they did love him : he tells the tale himself in a letter, it so pleased him. He had been away on one of his rare holidays and, having returned, he happened to pass one of the Mission bungalows. As he was going by he heard the voice of a little girl as she danced and shouted, ' Uncle Tom has come : Uncle Tom has come.' And she ran to him and clasped him about the knees and kissed his hand again and again. He could desire no better welcome.

That was the spirit of this man who set his face rejoicing homeward. There are some who have gone as missionaries and messengers of Christ to far lands, stern ascetics, plucking from their hearts the love of home and loved ones. One wonders sometimes how much love there was to pluck forth ; but if we cannot wholly

admire, we shall not judge. Others have taken measures to curb their rebel hearts and prevent the fulfilment of their longings. They do like St. Columba, who buried his coracle in Iona lest his heart should carry him back to his beloved Ireland. Tom Dobson was not of either of these companies. He went where clear duty called him, and he had no hesitation when he went and no regrets, but his heart, untravelled, dwelt all the time in Scotland. He did not discharge his task in India with any the less zest and purpose and desire because very often his thoughts and his affections 'over seas went leaping' to his friends at home.

Perhaps those teach their hearts best to love the eternal things who love the temporal beauty which is its symbol, and perhaps those only earn possession in all its richness and its peace of the home of God to whom a home on earth was a place wholly beloved. Certainly this 'homo desideriorum' was one who loved his own land and longed for the faces of his own

people with a passionate and almost painful longing. It did not make him inappreciative of the charm of other lands : the key to beauty in one land is a key to beauty everywhere. But his own ' dim, green, well-remembered isle ' was ever the queen of his affection. He describes soon after his first arrival in Poona how one night after dinner he went out into the quiet night and stood by the river-side. ' In the deep black waters the sky with a few bright stars was reflected. The night was balmy, the air balmy and laden with the scent of flowers, and all so still. I stood for a long time wondering if ever there was a note of turmoil or strife in nature's aspect in India and thinking of—Loch Long.' It was the same month by month and year by year. He never could forget. ' God ! ' he quotes later in a letter, ' God ! for the little brooks that tumble as they run ! ' And so also the letters that told of home and friends were to his heart as cold water in a thirsty land. He could not live without them. He

hungered for the weekly mail from home like a starving man, and when it was late or letters few or brief he felt defrauded. He expostulates even with the 'P. and O.,' the great Company that, placid and indifferent to its clients' praise or blame, bears to and fro the Indian mail.

O P. and O., O P. and O., why don't ye tak'
a thocht ye?

Our grumble is not piano, 'tis growing loud
and forte!

This Company made some reparation for past faults when the *Marmora* bore him home again to the rigour and refreshment of a Scottish winter. He felt keenly the need of this renewal. One's physical and mental powers inevitably betray signs of wear and tear and run less smoothly after five years of such strain as his were constantly subjected to. For him to breathe the air of Scotland once more and climb its hills and look into the eyes of his friends there was to have all his youth given back again. He experienced what he had de-

scribed in a letter from India two years before. 'At home (in winter),' he wrote, 'one felt impelled to be moving—mentally and spiritually, I mean—one was for ever seeing new vistas in front, and feeling the keen pleasure of going on. But here? Mind is dormant, aspiration never was born, and all the forces that ever attacked the mind of man to drag him to lazy ease and base indulgence are at their strongest. Oh it is hard enough to keep at that "whereunto we have attained"—that's the struggle here; and the regions above and beyond we never get even a far-off, mist-bedimmed sight of. Despondent? No; but in the next letter you write you must make me feel the tingle of frost and the vim of a snell wind once again.'

He felt now, not at the mere call of imagination, but in the reality of experience, that tingle of frost and that snell wind, and if the vistas had dimmed at all they now opened again before him and called him on. He had no more than five months in Scot-

land, but these were not given by any means to 'lazy ease and base indulgence.' No doubt there were many evenings, such as he had often dreamed of, with the couch drawn before the fire and himself and a friend at either end and all the problems of the world to survey and to solve. He was not, as we have seen, a fluent or a frequent talker, but no one loved more a debate with a friend, serious and sincere, when the deep meanings of things were probed and the right road sought with no shirking of the difficulties and the dark places. The problems of poverty and the relations of capital and labour must have been many a time discussed, for there was much poverty and unemployment in Glasgow that winter, but it is not likely that Tom Dobson would do nothing in such a case but talk, so part of his precious five months was spent in personal investigation of the condition of the unemployed and in distributing relief under the direction of the city authorities. He also gave what

time he could to speaking in churches in behalf of the missionary needs of the field. And thus the five months sped past, and in April 1909 he was back again in Poona in the midst of the heat of the hottest season of the year.

During the five years that he had spent in Poona already he had lived in various places, the question that decided his choice of a residence being, not whether the place was comfortable but whether it was convenient to his work. He never came under the tyranny of his tools. The house he lived in or the weapons of his service mattered to him not at all except as instruments by means of which that service could be well discharged. Accordingly on his return from furlough he chose to live in a house where he would have little comfort, but where he could help Indian Christian young men more effectively than if he lived in the 'Cantonment' where most Europeans lived. In this way he was able, by sharing his little bungalow with an Indian Christian young

man, to take a large part in establishing and carrying on a Young Men's Christian Association of which his Indian friend was the first secretary. He had during his previous term been closely associated, as we have seen, with this Association in its work for Anglo-Indian young men and for soldiers. He did not cease to take a keen and constant interest still in these departments of work, while now lending the strong encouragement and support of his personality to this new enterprise. Ever since the days when he founded a boys' club in the Rotten Row in Glasgow his first thought was of young men, and how he could help them. The two classes that especially appealed to him in India as needing all the help that could be given them for an honourable and decent life were soldiers and the young men of the Indian Christian Church. In both cases they seemed to him defrauded of what he himself valued so greatly, the discipline and comfort of home. The soldier in barracks, with neither wife

nor bairns, nor any quiet corner which he can call his own, with the Indian Bazaar as his playground and a tempter at every turning—he on the one hand drew Tom Dobson's sympathy just as the sight of the street boys in Glasgow had. And on the other hand there were the Indian Christian young men, just beginning to discover what the claims of Christian life and duty are, and beginning to make some endeavour to carry them out in practice, but having to do so in most cases with no high tradition of honour and self-respect, but on the contrary in the midst of that environment which we call 'heathen.' That is a word too often employed in ignorance and contempt to describe what in India is often noble and worthy while it is not Christian. But in a land where, while some sections of the population have inherited from many past generations a lofty civilisation and dignified ideals, others are held in a condition of permanent degradation, it cannot but be that the corruption of these slave classes

shall infect the whole of the society. As a result in the case especially of those young people of the humbler classes, from whom many of the Christians come, it is extraordinarily difficult to breathe that vitiated air and to maintain the Christian standards of living. The Christian home is peculiarly hard to create and to preserve while evil and debasing influences are pressing in upon it on every hand.

Almost all the time that he could spare from his main task was, accordingly, given up to those ministries of help. No duty that would bring him alongside of these young men was ever accounted by him too humble. Thus he spent many evenings after tiring days, serving out refreshments to soldiers in the Y.M.C.A. We have learned little of this man's character if we do not realise already that talk that ended in talk was abhorrent to him. So he girded himself and served these soldiers that so, when they were far away from their own land, they might spend their

evenings in decent cheerfulness and among friends.

How much of his heart he put into this duty of service may be indicated by the instance of one soldier whom he sought to help. This man, after months of clean and sober living, gave way to old temptations and fell. Tom Dobson, who had come to have a warm liking for him, laboured to win him back to sobriety. He went after him into the depths : he pled with him ; he tried to persuade him to come and live with him in his own house, but all to no purpose. The man had gone down into the pit of the Bazaar and would heed no appeals. When at last one evening it was evident that all his efforts to save him must be fruitless, Tom Dobson came home and cast himself down upon his bed and sobbed. It was in such moments that the passion of his nature, usually held so sternly under control, was revealed. He was possessed of a deep and at the same time a disciplined personality and carried ever

within his heart volcanic fires whose presence those only realised who were admitted behind the barriers of his reserve.

The same spirit kindled and kept aglow his efforts in behalf of Indian Christian young men. A group of them gathered about the rooms in which he lived and launched an Indian Y.M.C.A. He was always there standing by them with few words but with the steady assurance of his encouragement and support. They used to go out, he accompanying them, to surrounding villages when they had some leisure, and there they would give their testimony to their faith. These expeditions into the surrounding country were not rapid forays, the mode of conveyance being a great, lumbering bullock-waggon which they hired for the purpose, but, no doubt, the fellowship as they made their slow progress to their destination was no less valuable to themselves than the preaching of their message was to their hearers, and the quiet Scot who accompanied them had something

to give to them that was precious, while at the same time we may be sure he had something to get that his quiet attention did not miss. He was soon fully aware of the very limited effectiveness of this kind of preaching. He went with a friend on one occasion about this time to one of the great religious festivals for which this part of India is notable. A multitude of people drawn together by various motives, not a few of them moved by real religious longing, desiring to attain to fellowship with God—many no doubt coming at the call of custom or of curiosity or of cupidity—were gathered at the temple of Vithoba at Pandharpur, and, as was right, messengers of the Christian gospel were there too that they on the great day of the feast might, like their Master, 'stand and cry.' But Tom Dobson soon realised how ineffective in many cases were these efforts because ill-adjusted to reach the minds and hearts of those who listened. So many employed conventional phrases that they had been taught to use,

and that probably meant something to them, but that, however frequently repeated, opened no doors in their hearers' hearts. The message so spoken brought no power with it. This was a discovery that he was often to make and that in later days and in other circumstances troubled him much. How to convey the Christian gospel so that it would have meaning and win its way into these desiring hearts—that is a problem of the first consequence to the Christian evangelist. Tom Dobson knew how to make his acts speak the message of love. But to convey that message in words that were not dumb and strange to the Indian hearer—he was aware that that was no simple or easy matter.

But whatever doubts were in his own mind as to the effectiveness of such means as these young men were using, he was not a man to criticise them and weaken them in their sincere endeavours. The heart they put into it was the thing. There was the genuine desire to do good, and for Tom

Dobson there was never any hesitation about getting alongside of such a desire and supporting those who felt it. So he went out with these young men week by week. And for the same reason when there was a stirring among the Indian Christian people in Poona and a mustering of their forces for what was called an Evangelistic Campaign, he was at once among them encouraging them in this good purpose. He helped with all his energy in organising these efforts and in stimulating them to maintain them when the first ardour had begun to cool. We see him already in these activities holding up before himself and his Indian friends those qualities that he was aware to be those they most needed and that to the end he had unweariedly to proclaim to them—the qualities of self-reliance and tenacity, of patient continuance in well-doing—those which are just the hardest to acquire of all the graces that faith in God bestows upon a man whether in the East or in the West.

He was not a trained theologian and, though he was never content till he had a principle to guide his actions, he did not use theological language, but he had a clear conception of certain fundamental aspects of life and its meaning. A friend about this time wrote to him of the new generation in the West as inclined to discard old formulæ and turn their backs on much that an earlier time had believed. He replied with what we may take as a summary of his faith, as it was then, in its broadest outline. 'There is good and evil in the world,' he writes. 'They cannot be at peace. Evil might want to compromise with Good, but Good can never—it must become absolute. There is a warfare then. The greatest leader in the fight is Christ—the man Christ Jesus, King in the Kingdom of righteousness, goodness, the Kingdom of God. He appeals to all—"Will you serve me by doing good, by loving?" Is there any theology in that? Is there anything in that that can be allowed to be cast into the melting-

pot ? ' Such was the long campaign for which this soldier had enlisted, and every call of his Captain found him ready, every fellow-soldier in the struggle found in him a brother.

Thus the days and weeks and months of his service went past with few events to mark them as outwardly notable, but with constant and unremitting labour and with much inward growth. The work of the Press made steady progress, and its manager was always annexing to that work additional outlying spheres of service. A Leper Asylum in connection with the Mission to Lepers had been added to the departments of work cared for by the United Free Church of Scotland, and many calls for his help came to him from it. During all the years of his residence in Poona that followed, much of his time and strength was given to this branch of the work of the Mission. The care and the control of such an Asylum is always an exacting responsibility, making a great demand upon one's sympathy and

compassion for a peculiarly afflicted people, and at the same time demanding considerable firmness for the enforcement in difficult circumstances of discipline and control. These circumstances were all the more difficult when this institution was being established and the inmates, accustomed to a free life of wandering and the licence that their condition permitted them, were being persuaded to remain in the Asylum and obey its rules. Tom Dobson was just the kind of man to whom a Superintendent, harassed and in difficulties, would inevitably turn, and his help and advice and co-operation were continually sought. For a considerable period he was Secretary and treasurer of the Institution. If its wells were falling too low, if its roof had been injured by a monsoon hurricane, if additions had to be made to its buildings, to whom but to Tom Dobson would recourse be had? The Asylum lies six miles away from Poona and it was no easy matter for one who had all the business of a Printing

Press all day upon his hands to find time to hasten on his bicycle over those six rough, steep miles in response to the call of his colleague, but Tom Dobson never failed to respond. Even after night had fallen he would go out with a magic lantern, and by means of the pictures of the life of Christ, thrown on a white-washed wall of the Asylum, help to bring a message of comfort to these men and women whose lives were so bleak and comfortless.

These were years when the fires of Indian political ambition were kindling into steadily growing flames, spreading, for the most part silently, from Province to Province of the land. Here and there something happened, such as the partition of Bengal or the imprisonment of a popular leader, which caused the flames to leap out in a brief conflagration. But as yet the tremendous stimulus that the Great War brought when it came, was absent, and the progress towards India's full awakening was comparatively slow. There could be no better

watch-tower from which to observe events as they occurred and to weigh and judge their significance than Poona afforded, and Poona had no more keen-sighted watcher of events than Tom Dobson. One window that was open to him was that which his sympathy with the Indian mind on the subject of strong drink afforded. One of the minor causes of misunderstanding and conflict between the Indian and his foreign governors has been the lack of sympathy between them on this subject. Few Europeans in India, outside of the ranks of the missionaries, realise how strong an appeal the ancient tradition forbidding the use of intoxicants still makes to the higher classes of Hindus, and few, even if they realise it, sympathise with the feeling behind it. This feeling may spring from what appears to be little more than a kind of taboo, and it may be very imperfectly moralised or rationalised. It represents, nevertheless, a valuable protective instinct that is widely prevalent among the people of India, and it

ought surely to be encouraged and strengthened with a view to averting from that land by its help the hideous evils which intemperance has produced in the West. This at least was Tom Dobson's conviction, and he was ready and eager to co-operate to these ends with non-Christian workers in the temperance cause. He became one of the Secretaries of the Poona Temperance Association under the Presidentship of the venerable social reformer and Sanscrit scholar, Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, and under the Vice-Presidentship of the ablest political leader of the time in India, Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

The temperance problem is for the most part a non-political question in the West. In India circumstances have made it very largely a political question, a source of conflict between Indian claims, on the one hand, for the realisation in the Government of their own ideas and foreign prejudices, on the other, thwarting this desire. In this matter Tom Dobson and those who agreed

with him were strongly on the side of Indian sentiment, and joined again and again with Indian leaders in pressing the Indian view upon the reluctant authorities. The political aspect of the agitation tended to make it sometimes dangerously violent, and the presence in it of a man of his calm judgment was of value in such circumstances in restraining those who desired for political ends to stimulate this violence. On the other hand, one who advocated as he did Indian demands in this connection was likely to fall under suspicion as hostile to the Government. These facts did not deter Tom Dobson from setting himself by the side of those who were seeking to protect their people from a dangerous enemy. A movement designed to awaken the authorities from this resolute indifference and to constrain them to close, as they alone could, some of the excessive number of liquor-shops in Poona, culminated in a huge demonstration in the city, when 4000 or 5000 people gathered and were addressed

by representative leaders of every type. Tom Dobson was one of the two or three Europeans who took part in this great gathering, which compelled attention and secured at last a considerable improvement. But in other less spectacular ways as well he cultivated friendship with those Indians who shared in his desire to help their country onwards in liberty and clean living.

He could not but, in these circumstances, form opinions on the Indian political situation and on the political capacity of Indian leaders. Sometimes in his letters he indicates frankly the conclusions at which he had arrived in these connections. Thus he says in one letter, written at a time when what were called the 'Morley reforms' were being carried through, and Indians were being admitted for the first time among the highest executive officers of the Central and Provincial Governments—'I do not believe the Indian is capable of governing well, but, of course, on principle I believe in letting men try to govern themselves

and in giving them every opportunity of learning and training ; but where there is so much lack of right appreciation of the worth of man, of righteousness, of justice, then I would hesitate and would say—even I, a proud, contemptuous Britisher, of a race whose hands have not always been clean—that when this people show a moral fitness, they may have the rule themselves.’

He had expressed a similar opinion in connection with the visit to India of Mr. Keir Hardie at a somewhat earlier period. Mr. Keir Hardie was the founder of the Independent Labour Party, and in all the ardour and sincerity of his championship of the oppressed and the exploited everywhere he came to India in 1907 and endeavoured to make himself acquainted with its problems. It was impossible for one so wholly uninstructed in the history and traditions of India to understand in the course of a tour of a few weeks the extraordinarily complex circumstances of her people. He looked at India with ingenuous and wholly

Western eyes and was deceived. The extremist political leaders who were really in little sympathy with his aims and ideals led him captive. Tom Dobson had an opportunity of meeting Keir Hardie in Poona, and made an effort to open his eyes to the fact that an Indian caste was not a Trade Union, and that a deep gulf divided the Brāhman mind from that of the Independent Labour Party. But he made no impression. 'Oh,' he cried, 'that a man should come all the way from home to add to this Babel of talk! That this man should be avowedly in favour of liberty, a hater of monopoly and class privilege, and yet should have associated with and supported a class and a monopoly more criminal and inhuman than any that exists in Great Britain!'

It will be seen that in his attitude to political problems, as in his attitude to every problem that life presents, Tom Dobson was always a moralist first. Character was for him fundamental. He might be called a Puritan, but he had none of the

gloom and the blindness to the world's beauty that Puritanism has been charged with producing. At the same time the light-mindedness of Anglo-Indian Society disgusted him. It disgusted him all the more because closely allied with this shallowness was what he describes as 'the concentrated flunkeyism of India.' 'Poona,' he writes, 'is a study at present—an impending famine, cholera, plague, enteric, and locusts, on one side; dances, amateur theatricals, concerts, dinners, race-meetings, gymkhanas, on the other.' That was the careless world upon which on 4th August 1914 there fell—as upon so many other communities equally unconcerned and unaware—the sudden thunderbolt of war.

By that date certain significant changes had come into Tom Dobson's life. In November 1911 he was married. The lady who came out from Scotland to be his wife belonged to the group in Glasgow with which he, from the days before ever he came to India, had been so closely associated. The

family to which she belonged shared in that love of the beautiful, and that love of music, both of which meant so much to him. She herself was an artist, trained in the Glasgow School of Art. Their kinship in feeling and conviction is indicated by the fact that like him she had strong vegetarian views. It meant a great enrichment to this man of deep affections when he was able by this lady's coming to exchange 'house' for 'home.' We may be sure that what he gained was not kept selfishly to himself but that his happiness overflowed in good to others less fortunate. When in April 1914 he and his wife went home to Scotland on his second furlough they brought with them a little girl one year old, in whom their hearts rejoiced. But when in September of the same year they were returning to India the little one was taken with a sudden and sharp illness and her body had to be committed, off the coast of Malta, to the sad keeping of the sea. This was a blow that struck deep into the parents' hearts,

and though other little ones came to take her place, Jessie could never be forgotten. Eight years later, shortly before his own death, he told his wife in a letter from Jalna that that night he had dreamt of Jessie. 'We had got her back. I was told quite plainly that she had just been taken from us for a wee while, and that now we could have her with us again.' Soon afterwards he did indeed get her back.

It was a sore business to return to Poona in that September of war, and how much sorer when this was added. Tom Dobson was no militarist or imperialist ; he loved peace and desired the ends of the Kingdom of God. When a young man he gave up his connection with the Lanark Volunteers because of his dislike of war and its trappings. In the circumstances of some wars he might well have been a 'conscientious objector' of the most resolute kind. But in the face of the situation of August 1914, all his hesitations vanished. There seemed to him to be here a challenge to right and

justice that could not be ignored. And when his friends, many closely akin to him in sentiment on such subjects, went, and he could not go with them, it was a bitter trial to his keen and ardent spirit. He had to turn back to Poona, leaving them behind to fight and some of them to die. To his knightly nature the choice he had to make was a cruelly hard one, and all the long dark years till November 1918 he was struggling to be set free to go. To any one who knows what spirit he was of it is plain that it was far harder for Tom Dobson to stay at his post at Poona than to go where his friends were fighting and falling.

What he could do, short of going himself to fight, he did. His home in Poona became a home for numbers of the fighting men who were gathered there for training. There was nothing that he could do that was not done to cheer the sick in hospital and the lonely in barracks. He at once joined the Poona Volunteer Rifles and later—when it was formed—the Indian Defence

Force. His soldierly qualities and his thoroughness and capacity for command were at once made full use of, and his spare time was fully occupied by his duties as sergeant, and as bayonet instructor, and later as lieutenant and captain. He had no desire to have a commission, and when first it was offered to him he declined it because he would be of more use as Company Sergeant Major. He had none of the swagger that often accompanies the uniform of a commissioned officer, but he certainly possessed the qualities of a 'beloved captain.' One of his fellow-officers in a tribute to him published after his death in the *Times of India*, bore witness to the energy and efficiency of his discharge of these as of all his duties. 'Though a terror to slackers on parade he was known to the ranks as a just and considerate officer, and when off duty his unbounded good nature and keen sense of humour won him popularity at once.'

So these four grim years went past.

They seem in retrospect to form a long black tunnel into which the world descended ; it seems as though for a space the sun was eclipsed and reason ceased to rule and time stood still. Most of those who emerged and sought to resume a life of order and humanity were different from what they had been : they felt ' tired and grown old.' The difference in Tom Dobson was not of that kind : it was a deepening of purpose and a more intense desire to be helping to make a better world. He had beaten against the bars that kept him at his post of duty in Poona, and when he could not escape to take his share in the ' war against war,' he turned with eagerness to an opportunity to share in another war against evil that would give more scope to his energies than the work in Poona gave, and that claimed him with a greater urgency of need. The call that brought him to Jalna, to give to that region the last and crowning period of his service, had been becoming clearer to him as a call he must not disobey. As long

as the war continued he was tied to his post in Poona, but with its ending the way to an arrangement that would make it possible for him to undertake this new responsibility began to open. It had become more and more manifest to his colleagues in the Poona Mission, that, sore as would be their loss if he went elsewhere, his exceptional gifts demanded a sphere where they could have wider scope. There was no field in which the necessity was more pressing or the opportunity greater than that which the Jalna work afforded. Accordingly, when the Scottish Mission Industries Company turned its attention to this field, and agreed to take a share in the important efforts that were there being made to help the people up to freedom and self-respect by means of the establishment among them of Co-operative Agricultural Banks, Tom Dobson was invited to undertake this duty. He was not to be limited in his responsibilities to this particular branch of service. He was to be a missionary of the United

Free Church in the Jalna District, seeking the good of the people in every way that opportunity offered, but the method of Co-operative Credit was one main means of improving their condition which had already been tried there and elsewhere, and that Tom Dobson, by his business ability and his experience, was well fitted to advance. It was a method in the value of which he himself had full confidence and which agreed with what he called his 'gospel of work,' with his desire to restore men to manliness and self-respect. The need of the Jalna people for such qualities appealed to him, and accordingly he accepted the invitation, and in 1919 he returned to Scotland with his wife and family that he might make preparations for undertaking this new task.

IV

JALNA: THE PLACE AND ITS PROBLEMS

Ah ! Fredome is a noble thing !
Fredome mays man to haiff liking.

BARBOUR.

JALNA is a town of some consequence in the Nizam's Dominions. This is the largest in extent of all the independent states in India and is under a Muhammadan ruler who is officially known as His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Haiderabad. Jalna, which has a population of about 30,000, is towards the north of this State, and stands about 180 miles east of Bombay and the sea. All round it stretch the wide plains of the Deccan. Throughout the centuries successive tides of civilisation have flowed round about it and ebbed again, successive storms of war have swept past it. There were first, if legend can be trusted, Rāma and

his monkey-allies driving before them the demon hosts of Rāvana ; then the peaceful monks of Buddha carving their amazing sculptures out of the living rock at Ellora, and painting their dreams in shapes and colours of beauty on the cave-walls of Ajunta. Later, the Marātha poet-saints went by singing their hymns of longing for the divine fellowship. Presently Jalna had another kind of visitor when Shivaji and his fierce horsemen appeared before the town and claimed their tribute ; and later still, forty miles to the north, Arthur Wellesley learned one of his early lessons in the art of war on the battlefield of Assaye.

A new warfare began when there came to Jalna, soon after the Sepoy Mutiny had been suppressed, messengers of the Christian Gospel. From this early beginning the work of building up a Christian Church has gone on quietly and continuously for sixty-five years. For a large part of this time the leadership in this enterprise was entrusted

by the Free Church of Scotland to Indian missionaries. There was, first, Rev. Ganpatrao Navalkar, distinguished as a Marāthi scholar. His period of service in Jalna was, however, brief. Later came one of the most notable of the early converts from Hinduism in this part of India, Dr. Narayan Sheshadri, and for twenty-six years he lived and laboured in the Jalna district. It is a fact of deep significance that both of these Indian Christian leaders were men of high social rank and of high education, and that, this being so, their work in that district was almost wholly among the most ignorant outcastes of the community. Dr. Narayan Sheshadri had been a Brāhman : those who listened to his message and entered the Christian Church in Jalna were almost to a man members of the Māng community. What this signifies, as indicating the completeness of the transformation of values which Christ brings, it is not easy for a foreigner to realise. 'Brāhman' symbolises the last extremity of social and religious

arrogance and exclusiveness, an inheritance of pride and privilege, unbroken through three thousand years : ' Māṅg ' signifies the unspeakably abject. But in Jalna and elsewhere Christ has done the impossible and caused these extremes to meet. He has broken down a middle wall of partition far more deeply based in prejudice than that between Jew and Gentile. The Māṅg entering the Christian Church was passing from slavery to at least the possibility of freedom, and the door of escape was opened wide for him by one who, when a Brāhman, had represented the very order that had enslaved him.

It is difficult to convey a true idea to a foreigner of what the life of an outcaste in India involves. It is necessary, in the first place, to realise that the social order of Hinduism, its elaborately articulated system of caste, controls the lives of its members with a completeness and an authority that are without parallel elsewhere. Its laws have a far higher sanction than those of any king

or government : they are divine. To live in accordance with them is to live and breathe ; to dwell beyond their pale is to be outside of what may properly be called living. The Sudras, according to the ancient lawgiver, form the lowest class of Hindus, sprung from Brahmā's feet. But there is a lower place than that of the feet : and those who belong to it are sub-Hindu—we might almost say sub-human. Every people has its arrogances and its exclusions : there have been Greeks and barbarians, Jews and Gentiles : there is talk to-day of ' the white race ' and the yellow peoples. But nowhere has the contempt for the ' lesser breeds without the law ' organised itself into a system so rigid and so relentless as in India. There is no loophole of escape from the rule of the tyrant except that which is open to all members of the human family—death.

Of these ' depressed ' classes, to use the name commonly applied to them in India, there are nearly sixty millions. They are

—to use another significant designation—‘untouchables.’ They too have among themselves various grades of abjectness and in the hierarchy of this underworld the Māng has no place of pride. The two principal castes of ‘untouchables’ in the Marātha country are the Mahārs and the Māngs, and the Māngs have always been reckoned as the lower of the two in the social scale. It is said among them that in pre-British days the Brāhman rulers imposed three rules upon them to limit the range of their pollution. They had to wear a collar of wool about their necks that all might know them to be Māngs. They had to walk with a branch of a tree hanging from their backs and sweeping the roads behind them that the print of their unhallowed feet might not remain in the dust. They must spit into a vessel that they carried with them, for only the high caste man was to be allowed the privilege of thus contaminating the highway. They have more freedom under a British, even under

a Muhammadan Government. It is only in Travancore, a Hindu native state, that the cruel repressions of ancient days retain something of their original vigour, and there also at the present time the new spirit in the land is awakening in the breasts even of those so long humiliated, inciting them to demand that they be permitted to walk along public roads that have hitherto been closed to them. But everywhere it is the rule that they are excluded from the Hindu temples and that they must not live within the bounds of the village. Exclusions and repressions such as these do not proceed only, we may be sure, from arrogance. They probably have a deeper root in fear. There is evidence that the Māngs were once believed to have dangerous alliances with evil spirits, some of them perhaps the gods of a pre-Hindu worship, now turned to devils. In consequence of this old fear when demons at the time of an eclipse threaten to devour the sun or the moon, it is the Māngs whom the Hindus of higher

castes seek to placate with gifts in order that they may use their influence to avert the calamity. In the tower that dominates the wall that once protected a village from its enemies there is frequently a shrine for the worship of the 'Māng-hero,' that is, it seems probable, the Māng who was built into the foundations of the tower to ensure its strength. Thus these people are both feared and despised and were alternately ill-used and placated. But after so many centuries of subjection there is little fear of them to-day. Only the contempt survives.

If any community is refused the protection of law, they will refuse to obey it. They will, if they dare, become rebels. Thus it is nothing surprising that the Māngs are often thieves. Having been treated as slaves so long, they have now deeply rooted within them the slave vices. They are often cunning, deceitful, cruel. Oppression and injustice bear on this soil their inevitable harvest. One night at Tom Dobson's tent door an old Christian unlocked the

stores of reminiscence and told of things that had been among his people in his own early years and that he had heard of. Only seventy years ago, he said, many dacoits 'would attack the villages in broad daylight,' and 'when they wanted anything they just went out and stole it.' 'That was just after the Mutiny and there were lots of bands of wandering soldiers roving about, whom they took and slew as they thought fit. . . . "O yes," said one of the men, "if our people here in Bethel wanted anything"—(and this was at a later stage)—"they just went and waylaid a cart and took from it what they wanted." They pointed to a nullah (a dry water-course) down the way a bit—"Plenty of folks have met their death down there, sahib." And some of their own forebears have been hanged from trees until they were dead when they were caught in the act. Now if lying or stealing crop out, is it any wonder? The old life was far more lively and exciting.'

To change that old life and to exorcise these evil spirits that centuries of oppression had begotten—that was and is the task of the messenger of Christ in such a district as Jalna. As Narayan Sheshadri and his fellow-workers told them of a God of righteousness and mercy and loving-kindness, and of a way of life for men to live in fellowship with such a God, it must have been hard for them to believe that such a message could be true. When they told of One who stood up in the synagogue of Nazareth and claimed to have been sent to give release to the captive, to set at liberty them that are bruised, a way of freedom began to open before the eyes of that enslaved people. Dimly they realised that here was a road of hope for them, though what it signified and whither it led cannot have been clear to their dull minds. But it was a road to freedom—‘road,’ as an old Buddhist said long centuries before, ‘that never wearied men’—and so they began, in little companies of pioneers, to

set their feet upon it. There has never been anything that can be called a 'mass-movement' in Jalna, but all through the sixty-five years there has been a steady trickle, sometimes swelling to a stream, of men and women into the Church of Christ. There is now a Christian community numbering three thousand four hundred, scattered in little groups through more than a hundred villages, almost all of them out-caste Māngs who have escaped—in greater measure or in less—from bondage. Of how few among all the children of men can it be said that they have broken every chain! And if that is so of those who have an ancient heritage of freedom, how can it but be much more so of those who have a heritage of enslavement so much more ancient?

So the task of emancipation was begun and the long slow work went on year after year. In 1891 Dr. Narayan Sheshadri died on his way back to India from a visit to Scotland, and his body was committed to

the waters of the Red Sea. A young doctor, Dr. A. G. Mowat, took up the burden, heavy already, but made heavy almost beyond bearing by the coming of famine. This district, so widely extended, so exacting in its demands, has never been adequately staffed, and the strain upon its missionaries has always been very severe. Until Tom Dobson joined the staff in 1920 it had never had more than two Scotsmen, a doctor and a 'padre,' to superintend the general work of the Mission. Even the physical labour of caring for the little companies, scattered over so wide an area, of men and women, seeking with feeble will and little knowledge to live the Christian life in surroundings so hostile, and at the same time of inspiring and directing educational and evangelistic effort, was more than any two men should ever be asked to face. And in addition there was the continual strain on heart and mind in choosing the wisest course to pursue for the people's good, in carrying the burden of their sins, their weakness, their ignorance.

It might be easy enough, given the generosity, that compassion inspired, of the Christian people in Scotland, to improve the outward condition of the people, to feed them even in time of famine, to equip some at least of them with fields and houses, and to provide them with a little knowledge. But these were sorry gifts to give, so long as no way was found of restoring to them the manhood of which they had been so long defrauded. To make them free men in Christ Jesus—to teach them to climb up out of the abyss—that is the labour, that is the toil. The instinct of compassion in those who wish to befriend these down-trodden ones may even sometimes conflict with and hinder this chief purpose of the Christian Gospel, and in Jalna it did not wholly escape from proving such a hindrance. It was impossible to baptize them into the Christian Church and leave them to their degradation. To open their eyes so that they could see the mire in which they lay, and at the same time to stretch no

hand to lift them up out of it would be inhuman. These Māngs were village servants and gained their living as such, but the living that they gained was bound up with this system of humiliation on the one hand and with idolatry on the other. In an account of Jalna and its problems that he wrote for the enlightenment of his friends at home, Tom Dobson remarks that the Indian village system is often praised by foreigners, but such praise is given in ignorance of the fact that the system has produced a condition of things 'wherein the village servant may be perhaps of more value than a sheep or a goat, but is literally of less value than a bullock.' 'Any animal,' he goes on, 'may cross the threshold of a Kunbi house' (that is, the house of a cultivator, the main caste of rural India, who belong to the middle class), 'even the most miserable dog of the village—but a Māng may not. One day I saw that a Māng had inadvertently placed a brass water vessel near the door of a Marātha's

“wada,” and the woman of the house, bringing water from the well, could not enter until the offending vessel had been moved to the necessary ceremonious distance. Yet the lady had come from the well along village lanes that were an offence to nose and eyes and feet, so revolting are they in their state of filth.’

To save those who had become Christians from such a servitude and its debasing rewards was one of the first and plainest duties laid upon the more fortunate members of the Christian brotherhood into which baptism had brought them. And this was necessary also for the reason that their duties as village servants not only were degrading because of the treatment that accompanied them, but were sometimes associated with the idolatrous worship which on becoming Christians they had renounced. They were required to beat a drum before the village idols, and were thus made use of in the service of the temples within which they were not permitted to

set their unhallowed feet. New ways of making a living had to be found for those who, having become Christians, could no longer be slaves and could no longer be idolators. Dr. Narayan Sheshadri realised these facts and proceeded accordingly to acquire land for the new converts, that they might make their living as farmers. This was the natural course to take in the case of such village-dwellers, but the Māngs had never learned to cultivate the soil. This is the duty of the Kunbi caste and the rigid lines of Indian caste division has always rendered it difficult if not impossible for any one to follow any occupation not allotted to him by custom and tradition. So the Christian village which Dr. Narayan Sheshadri established did not prosper.

There is no need to tell here the story—which could be paralleled in many other parts of India—of the vicissitudes of fortune of these Christians as they travelled by a long and steep and winding path ‘up from slavery.’ Mistakes were made, no doubt,

by those whose task it was to guide them. The instinct of kindness betrayed them sometimes into making the way too easy, since only by suffering hardness can men be made and character be fashioned. Thus year after year went past and the growth of the people in Christian manhood and in independence was grievously slow. Narayan Sheshadri died ; others entered into his task and sought to repair his mistakes and build up a stronger, cleaner life. One thing was clear, that he had made no mistake in choosing a life for these people in the fields and under the open sky. But much had to be done ere they could learn how to make the soil their servant, and ere they could learn, after the long demoralisation of serfdom, habits of industry, thrift, and honesty. And always there was Nature, an enemy—as it sometimes seemed—lying in wait to issue forth suddenly and destroy them by drought and famine. That was the situation when in 1910 one of the Jalna missionaries, Mr. Wilkie Brown,

initiated a new method by which to help the people up to independence and self-respect, the method of co-operative credit.

This is a method which was being used in many countries in Europe to assist and encourage especially the poor agriculturist in his struggles with adversity. It had recently been introduced into India and had already given evidence of its usefulness. Its most immediate achievement is thus described by Tom Dobson : ' it relieved from the oppression of money-lenders ; it delivered from the tyranny of Capital, the oppressor, and made Capital, the servant, render his good offices.' How it is able to do this and what other good things may accompany this result we shall set forth largely in the words of Tom Dobson himself, taken from a paper on the subject which he wrote for his friends of the Literary Society of Montrose Street Church.

The principles of co-operative credit, he tells us, are simple. ' It accepts and proceeds upon the fact that the combined

credit of a group is greater than that of separate individuals. Credit means borrowing power and groups are always able to borrow at easier terms than individuals. Borrowing must always be upon security, and co-operative credit organises those who are without security and incapable of furnishing it, and borrows for them and furnishes security, the security of the character of the whole group, of the unlimited liability of all for the debts of each and of the intention and ability of each member of the group to work. . . . Its great strength, moral and financial, is its principle of unlimited liability, for this is the surest guarantee that the controlling Council of the group, or the group itself, will take the closest care to see that the individual member who received a loan is well worthy of the trust. Co-operative credit has thus always acted as a moral tonic in a community, for the unworthy have sought to become eligible for its benefits by virtue of new sobriety new diligence.'

The value of these principles and of their application is seen especially in the case of those who are engaged in agriculture, and in no case more manifestly than in that of these outcastes exchanging the condition of bondage for that of free cultivators of their own fields. It almost appears, as Tom Dobson puts it, as if the Indian has a 'flair' for getting into debt, but in any case the agriculturist everywhere requires capital to finance his operations in advance, and so is almost compelled to borrow. Further, the poverty of these people, and the irresponsibility which accompanies a position of subjection and dependence, drive them to the money-lender, and make them an easy prey to his craft and his cupidity. The following passage quoted by Tom Dobson in his essay indicates the fatal ease with which in the circumstances of such cultivators debt is incurred and grows. 'This agricultural indebtedness . . . does not arise from wanton extravagance; the expenditure of the ordinary cultivator is ordinarily very small.

It arises mainly from want of education, easy-going improvidence, and the tyranny of custom. Debt is easily contracted. Perhaps owing to some such calamity as drought or hail, or to some such expenditure as marriage in the family, a farmer finds himself in the spring in need of money to buy seed to carry him through to the harvest. He goes to the money-lender to borrow, say Rs. 100 (£6, 15s.). Formerly when transactions were in kind he received and paid his loan in grain, in kind. The usual interest was 25 per cent. This was for a loan until the harvest—about six months. When we consider the difference between the value of grain at seed-time and harvest, it does not appear so very exorbitant to demand one-fourth as much again at harvest for the grain borrowed at seed-time. But when money became the medium of exchange, custom prevailed to keep up the same rate of interest. Interest, therefore, is still often paid at the rate of 25 per cent. for six months. Custom also

permits the demand for prepayment of interest. The borrower thus receives Rs. 75 (£5), and not Rs. 100 (£6, 15s.). He has to pay Rs. 25 (£1, 15s.) as interest on this, in repaying the nominal debt of Rs. 100, so that he pays at the rate of 33 per cent. on a six months' loan, or 66 per cent. per annum. What wonder that a man in debt rarely becomes free !'

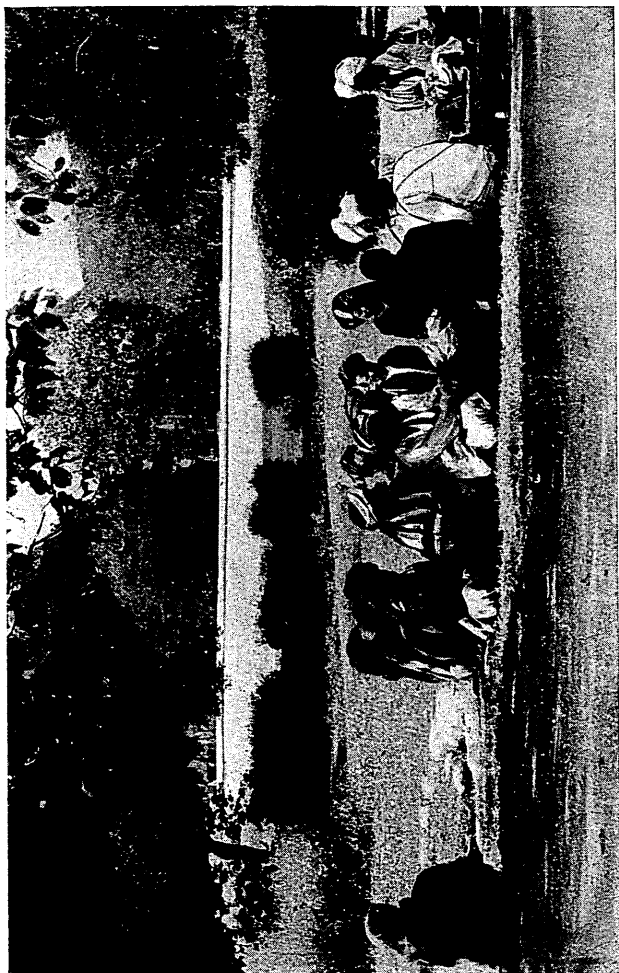
We shall have opportunities later of realising by what unscrupulous cunning this yoke of indebtedness was often riveted upon the neck of the unfortunate peasant. It is enough meantime to have this sketch in outline of the evil system from which it was hoped that co-operative credit would provide a way of deliverance. How successful this movement has proved in Denmark and in Ireland is well known. In India the difficulties it has to overcome are greater than in these lands, but there also much that was hoped for has been accomplished, and the future of co-operative credit is assured. The ancient village

organisation under a 'Panchayat' or governing Council of five, which, to the regret of many, had, under British administration, fallen into disuse, had now an opportunity of being revived and of resuming its task of training the people in citizenship. Here was a means of reviving the decaying life of the village. 'The village appeared to be the natural and fit field for the society, the unit of the organisation. Within each village, as every one knows the worth in morals and goods and industry of every one else, there would be little likelihood of bad debts, of loans being granted to those who were unworthy. One of the rules framed provides that no loan shall be made as to an individual from the financing organisation:—loans are granted to the Society through its Committee, and they are responsible that the loans are distributed to those fit to receive them. . . . Unlimited liability was something that would make the individual think of his neighbour's affairs with sympathetic interest, for if he

had to bear his share of losses, he would not be likely to let his neighbour's fields suffer in times of sickness or of disability from other causes.'

These are immensely valuable ends, not only material but moral, that this system of co-operative credit may serve. It was for the reason that it serves such ends that it was now called in to help in the emancipation of the Jalna people. 'It was a method of enlisting Christian philanthropy to help them without destroying self-respect or hindering its growth or the growth of independence. It was a method of placing money at the disposal of the needy that would not demean them, but that would let them feel that debt and doles are alike to be feared and that money should be bought and paid for by the fruits of labour. It seemed to promise help in the fight against famine and the money-lender, and in the struggle of placing the Christians on a plane where the demeaning things in village life would not touch them.'

It is not necessary to give any detailed account here of the progress of the co-operative credit movement in the Jalna district from 1910 until Tom Dobson joined the Mission staff there in 1920. During the first four years a considerable advance was made. From 1914 to 1918 progress slowed down and the difficulties became more apparent. By that time twenty-six societies had been formed, with a membership not only from among the Christians who had so recently been outcasts, but also from among the non-Christian Kunbi cultivators, whose attitude to these despised serfs had always hitherto been one of the utmost contempt. More important than the large number of fields that the members of the Societies had been able to acquire, and than the large capital in their hands, were the moral and spiritual consequences that had already begun to manifest themselves. Here is how Tom Dobson sums them up. 'The worth of the new hope born was not to be calculated—in the heart



A GROUP OF CO-OPERATIVE BANK MEMBERS, JALNA

of the Kunbi as well as in the heart of the one-time lawless Christian. Freedom was at hand. Certain escape from life below the bare subsistence line was now possible for many. Mutual help had been practised and had become to some more than a phrase of the missionary. . . . The whole difference was that which is between men as owners and workers of their own fields, and as slaves of the old system, hangers-on to the life of the village. Wonder of wonders, too, the Kunbis were coming in to join with them, were associating with them as equals, for within the banks there is no caste but that of the worker, no creed but that of brotherhood. The Kunbis of Indewadi will not work on Sunday because it is not the way of the Christians, and they now call on the Christians at Bethel, and sit and smoke with them in their houses. Christian and Kunbi members from Dahipuri will travel together to Jalna in the same cart, and eat and drink and sleep together by the way. Think of the gain, the increase in

self-respect ! . . . They whose cry for so long was, and still often is, " Give, give. What have you to give us ? " are now sometimes in the ranks of the givers. The children can now be spared for more regular attendance at school . . . and thus we are coming nearer to the ideal of a literate Christian Church. The opening of the societies to Kunbis opened a wide door of approach to them, and if there is now much less caste prejudice here than before, and if the Kunbis are always willing and often anxious to hear of the Christ religion, there was nothing that contributed so much as a method of co-operation.'

These were great gains. Now, however, hard times came upon the movement, discovering its weak places and the dangers that threatened its success. For four years in succession—from 1914 to 1918—the rainfall was insufficient, and as a result loans could not be paid when they fell due, nor even the interest upon them. This further had the consequence that a leniency that

contrasted with the tyranny of the money-lender in former days awakened the idea among some of the baser sort that such loans need never be repaid. The Co-operative Credit Societies were, perhaps, after all only the old Mission milch-cow under another name. Back came flooding through a hundred crevices of natural weakness and sloth the old dependence upon doles and gifts and the benevolence of the foreign 'father and mother.' But even this comfort failed them. The missionary, who was their friend, went—as missionaries sometimes must—on furlough : the business of the Co-operative Bank came for a time into the hands of officials of the Nizam's state, who made no allowance for human weakness or even for difficulties that came when the rain failed, difficulties for which not man but nature should have been blamed. Thus many members of the bank were driven again to the old enemy, the money-lender, and to the old debts were added new ones and mortgages and

agreements. 'The spirit of the members suffered,' says Tom Dobson, describing the situation. 'The old dull spirit of unending endurance took possession.'

'This lack of a right success,' he goes on, 'was not due to any defect in co-operation, but in this case to a succession of outward circumstances. Thus at the end of 1920 the whole movement was in a critical position.' It was into the midst of these difficulties and uncertainties that Tom Dobson came when, early in August 1920, he returned to India from furlough, but returned, not this time to Poona, but to Jalna.

V

JALNA: 1920-1921. FAMINE

Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish, they sit in black upon the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles send their little ones to the waters: they come to the pits, and find no water; they return with their vessels empty: they are ashamed and confounded, and cover their heads. Because of the ground which is chapt, for that no rain hath been in the land, the plowmen are ashamed. They cover their heads.—JEREMIAH xiv. 2-4.

IN 1919 Mr. and Mrs. Dobson and their two children went home to Scotland for a much-needed holiday. An arrangement had by that time been made between the United Free Church of Scotland and the Scottish Mission Industries Company by which he ceased to be directly under the latter company and became instead a missionary under the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Free Church. He had not hitherto been in charge of what is usually

described as 'mission work' nor had he been responsible to any missionary society. He belonged nominally to one of the 'auxiliary forces' of the missionary army, not to the regular army itself. In Poona, however, no one was aware of any such distinction, and no one was nearer the centre of Christian effort than he. His colleagues knew well his wisdom and his worth: they took full advantage of his willingness to share in all their tasks and invited him to join with them in guiding the policy of the Mission by becoming a member of the Mission Council. Now, however, he was to be officially recognised as a missionary of the Church at Jalna, his appointment there having specially in view his fitness to take charge of the department of Co-operative Credit, and to be manager of the Bank. The Scottish Mission Industries Company now associated themselves with this work for the benefit of the Christians at Jalna, and accordingly deposited in the Bank a considerable amount

of capital subscribed, in response to their appeals, by friends of the Church in Scotland.

Tom Dobson's furlough was largely occupied in preparation for this new task. He took advantage of every opportunity that presented itself of learning how co-operative credit had prospered in the West. He went to Ireland and studied with eager interest the fortunes of the movement there. He was particularly interested in meeting 'A. E.' who attracted him not only as an economist and agriculturist but as a poet. Ireland's long political conflict was nearing its climax at the time of his visit, and he watched with intense concern the travail through which presently the Free State came to birth. Wherever men were sincerely seeking freedom for ends that were not narrowly national and selfish, but that aimed at the ultimate benefit of all, Tom Dobson could be counted upon for whole-hearted sympathy. But he could spare no more than a glance for these Western

struggles. His heart was already over the seas in Jalna with the oppressed outcastes there. Their needs possessed him, and the whole energy of his mind was directed to making him as fit as might be to bring them succour.

On 26th June 1920 he sailed in the *Patricia* from Liverpool on his return to India. He returned alone. The time had come, which comes to most foreigners whose lot is cast in a tropical country, when the children had to be left behind, and Mrs. Dobson had to remain with them. There are, no doubt, to different people different degrees of pain in that experience. In the case of one with the power of affection that Tom Dobson had the wound went deep and the ache of it never became dull. The cry of his heart in his letters has a new poignancy and only the courage of a high task and a clear call holds him to his post. The prospect of 'the mail' shines before him week by week, like a pillar of fire: the irregularities and eccentricities of its coming

are far beyond jesting for him now. When the letters have arrived and he has read them, it is, he says, in words that throb with pain of an unhealing wound, 'like turning away from home again to face the absence afresh.'

It had to be. The *Patricia* bore him back in a voyage slow to weariness and exasperation. He had forebodings when the ship set sail, due, no doubt, to the shadow lying across his heart, and they seemed to him fulfilled when on a bright moonlight night by some strange incompetence of seamanship they were driven aground on an island in the Red Sea. 'A little bit broadside on, a little more wind, and I don't think the *Patricia* would have sailed the seas again.' The atmosphere of the ship was of the 'post-war' kind, with its resurgence of all the vanity and selfishness and folly that had been held for a time in check. An Albanian passenger with whom Tom Dobson made friends was hugely amused to learn that this so unmilitary missionary

was a captain, and wished that he might come up on deck in his captain's uniform that he might see 'the jaw drop' in the case of fellow officers of a very different type. There were many on board who had little enough to contribute to the solution of the problems that India presents. But there is no high tariff to keep out folly from that land or any land.

The sluggish ex-German ship brought him to port at last, and soon thereafter he was upon the scene of his future labours, surveying face to face the task allotted to him to which he was to be permitted to give no more than two years as full of 'agonia,' of toil of body, mind and heart as any two human years well could be. It seems a brief period within which to earn the designation 'champion of the outcaste,' but it was not brief if it be measured not in 'clock-time' but by the deeds done and the faith and resolution that upheld them. He of a surety 'in a short time fulfilled a long time.'

It was not long before his keen eye and quick mind had realised the situation and its seriousness. Here is what he found on his arrival in August, at a time when the whole of that wide region should have been green with the promise of harvest. 'In fields extending to hundreds of acres we found the crops withered. . . . For two years these fields, more than thirty acres each, have been idle and giving no return.' There was not only starvation but demoralisation also. 'It is difficult to conceive of anything more effective than the recurring failures of crops in depressing the people, in mocking effort and hope, in lowering standards of life and morals.' And, still further, there was the uprooting of homes, the exodus of whole villages in their despair, setting out across the wastes, seeking some place where they could live less empty of hope than in this which now gave them no food or drink or means of subsistence—nothing but a sky and a surrounding land, blank and bare to the horizon. 'I met

four groups of people who were trekking away from famine areas to places where they hear there is more rain. "Where are you from?" "O, we are from among the mountains." "What! Have you left your villages altogether?" "Yes, why should we stay there? There is no rain. God sends none." "But where are you going to?" "Anywhere. We shall sit down in the place where we can get our stomachs filled." Is it any wonder in such circumstances—is it anything we can blame them for—if, in words of St. Paul that correspond to one of their own proverbs, 'their god is their belly'? The 'three letter cavity,' as some one has called it (for in their own language this word, so often on their lips and in their thoughts, is a monosyllable of three letters), rules them. There is a saying of the Irish peasantry: 'The feel of the spade in the hand is no different for all your talk.' And what is natural in Ireland when the potato crop has failed is no less natural in India when the grain withers in the

fields. Can the message even of the divine love find a way into these hearts when all the powers of body and mind and will are absorbed in the struggle with grim necessity ?

These were some of the facts of nature with which in their remorselessness he was brought face to face as soon as he arrived in Jalna. With this grim enemy he would have to wrestle and by God's help subdue him to be an instrument of good. But there were enemies even harder to overcome than drought and dearth. More fatal than the evils that come from a cloudless sky and a pitiless sun were the evils that issued from the greed and cruelty and sloth and cowardice of men. The tyrant who held these people, body and soul, in his relentless grasp was the money-lender. His shadow darkened the whole land. And in the blighting shade of fear and of oppression there grew rank in the soil of the people's souls a whole crop of slave-vices. It was not long before Tom Dobson was aware of

these enemies to the people's progress and to his own peace. If this Greatheart was to be the champion of the outcastes he must do battle with those foes without and within. The money-lender was the Apollyon who straddled all across the way before him, and with him he must deal first. And he must also set his victims free from chains that they hugged and that they did not know as chains.

How these facts took form before him during the first months when he went about the villages surveying the situation, listening to many tales of tragedy and letting nothing pass un-noted by his vigilant eyes—this can be best presented in the vivid tale his letters tell. 'This people,' he writes in a letter written very soon after his arrival, 'is a poor people in mind and spirit, but they are wonderful physically. I do not know how they survive. For ten years there has not been a good rainfall, and each year, therefore, sees them go deeper into debt—if to the Banks, then their condition

is enviable, but if to the money-lenders, then their state is desperate. . . . The land is poor by reason of the lack of rain, for the soil is not bad. In lots of places it is good enough to yield good returns, if the rain would come, and even make the folks very rich. . . . The oppression that goes on is appalling. A man died, leaving a debt for his wife to settle. The wife could not, and the money-lender took the child out of the mother's hands and for seven months she never saw it. A man came in last night. The money-lender had closed his house, taken away all his belongings in the house and four bullocks besides to pay off a debt. We are going to that village as soon as possible. Another man came in this morning. He borrowed Rs. 10 from the money-lender and only got five in his hand. In a few months the money-lender is wanting Rs. 30 to square off the debt and, if he does not get it, he threatens all sorts of things. We are going to that village too. . . .

' There are signs of shortage and want on

all hands for the rain is fitful and insufficient. Already the villagers to the south and east are leaving for the districts to the north and west where the rains have been a little better. They say, "The time of death is at hand." "

' So long as I am in the bungalow at work at anything here, there is a continual stream of people of all sorts, wanting help or relief of some sort. Their need is great—O it is pitifully great—and the temptation to give a rupee and get rid of them is very great ; but it passes the wisdom or capacity of this man or his neighbour to devise schemes and plans for their real help or to find time to accomplish anything for them. Already we are full with promises to go to villages to investigate wrongs and oppression of different kinds and hardships, and still the stream shows no signs of drying up. A backward people and a people who take oppression and hardship and neglect as part of their ordinary portion and who seem to look for nothing else, but that the mission-

ary is a strange kind of sahib who listens with patience and who even has been known to help in some ways sometimes. It is pitiful to see the agitation and the weeping of big, hefty chaps, as they tell of what the money-lender has done to them, and how they brighten up if one says that he will be in their village in ten or twelve days and will see into the matter.

‘ This jungle bit of world is very bonny in its own way when one is away from the haunts of men, and the early morning and the nights out in the open air are very fine. There are moments when the stillness is very profound, but soon there is the howling of a dog or the clanging of a temple-bell to tell one that it is India and that the things that lie beneath the stillness are not conducive to calm thought. In my tour yesterday I was brought face to face with several examples of the working of the money-lender. In two cases the original debt had been less than Rs. 100, nearly Rs. 100 had been repaid in each case, and in

one case the money-lender had seized one field for the balance and in the other case he had seized two fields, and in each case, in spite of what had been re-paid, the money-lender said that the balance exceeded Rs. 300. High finance with a vengeance!'

'The woes these folks endure—from the money-lender and from their governors of one kind and another—are almost past belief, and if they can get a letter from the sahib to an official or a promise from the sahib to visit their village, they seem to think that the heavens are at last smiling upon them. There is a lot of hope of material gain in their attitude to Christianity, but it is not all that, and who is to quench the smoking flax?'

These are a few of the examples of the money-lender's power and rapacity that are given on many pages of Tom Dobson's letters. This sinister figure was continually coming between him and the sun-light, between the people and hope. A single additional instance may be given of an

unscrupulousness great enough almost to be magnificent. 'A Kunbi (cultivator) inherited a debt of Rs. 750 (£50) from his father, on the death of the latter fourteen years ago. In the interval the Kunbi has paid more than the original debt in produce, but the money-lender has recently obtained a decree in the courts giving him possession of two fields worth Rs. 1500 (£100) and he still claims over Rs. 4000 (£266) from the Kunbi.' No wonder his early verdict in Poona was confirmed by this later experience—that in India money-lending should be made a capital offence.

Such oppression and injustice inevitably produce a whole crop of vices. Why should men work hard if all the fruit of their effort goes to such men as these? If they are robbed and deceived by these evil men and the law gives them no redress, why should they not rob or lie? 'Darkness' is the word in their vernacular that they employ to describe the anarchy and corruption that so largely envelops their lives. And since

darkness envelops them why should they not do the deeds of darkness? 'A good rainfall renders very easy the gathering of a good crop, sufficient to pay interest to the money-lender, to provide food for man, and food for beast, and give some simple cotton clothes. So why work hard? To work hard may mean that it is all for nothing if the rain does not come, and if the rain does not come the money-lender will merely take the more. The Kunbi says that, if he has four fields, one is for his bullocks, one for his family, and two for the money-lender—until the money-lender forecloses and takes all!'

Thus the months went past in 1920 and with each month the prospect grew ever darker. Tom Dobson was finding his place in these grim surroundings, measuring the strength of his faith and his purpose against ills so gigantic. By September it was manifest that the autumn harvest—'the chief money-making crop in the year'—had failed, but there was still hope that the

spring harvest might in some measure make up for it. As the shadows deepened and the people became more desperate many of them turned with every art of flattery and guile to the Mission, seeking its help and confident that what so often had happened in their extremity in the past would happen once more. The faults that circumstances and sometimes mistaken kindness had accentuated could be seen now in them in high relief. ' From the very beginnings of things in this district the people have been so poor that the missionaries have felt that they must aye be giving. There are times for giving—here owing to famines they have been painfully frequent—but the results of all the kinds of givings are that the folks think that they need only ask in order to receive. They seem to think that I am not orthodox at all when I ask about what *they* intend to give and about what they have done. . . . In the history of the Co-operative Bank movement there are records of several failures, and one and all were the

result of there being too much money to be given away easily. . . .

‘ But there is hope, and maybe the new ideas will bear fruit some day. It is a fine thing to be trying anyway. I do not remember enjoying anything so much as this effort—except when I am conscious that I have made a mistake. . . . It is a country of fine soil and, given irrigation, it would be another “granary of the world.” About the villages there are some fine big shady trees and beneath these we sit and have it out with our friends and enemies ; but abroad there is only jungley *babul*¹ scrub mostly. But the scent of the yellow flowers in the cool of the morning is a treat like cool water. I never saw the *babul* in such quantities, and therefore never knew of its perfume in such sweetness before. There are many kinds of folks. Some of them are painfully backward ; these are they who “ have need of the physician.” There is the Kunbi community, and they are folks of backbone

¹ A very thorny kind of acacia.

and very little imagination and initiative. They are very friendly and hospitable within the bounds of what their customs permit, and their faith in the power of the sahib is pathetic. They are at the mercy of the money-lender.'

As the year nears its close and still the heavens are as brass, the situation becomes still more threatening. 'The scarcity of drinking water is greater than even in the last famine year of two or three years ago. Wells are going dry that had never failed before. How we would welcome rain and how our eyes "grow weary" as we look for it!' In some villages water had to be carried five, six, seven, and eight miles. But there are worse evils even than an empty well, and these begin to show themselves. 'I wonder what specific I could use for lying, lying that is systematic and ingrained.' And then next day he writes, 'If I stopped on the lying note last night I want to begin on the lazy note to-day. For it has been laziness and the result of laziness

and the love of laziness that I have been trying to counteract for the last two hours.'

But when he saw and censured these faults that made this task of helping the people so much harder, he saw at the same time implacable Nature making them what they were and making him sometimes lose heart. 'If the rain does not come, what is to happen? . . . The laziness of the people, the deceit of the people—where these are—are nothing to the struggle we have against this lack of rain. It makes everything futile. One's plans may be as fine as fine, and the rain does not come and the fine plans get a wilt that knocks the stuffing out of the planner as well.' So, with the uncertainty of blind circumstance (as it so often appears to us) on the one side, and the money-lender's relentless cupidity on the other, these unhappy people—Kunbi and Christian alike—were between the upper and the nether mill-stone. 'The Kunbis are so cute in their own way that one wonders how it is that they are ever

taken in by the money-lenders. I once said that to the Registrar and he said that when a man's children were crying at home for bread he would be liable to believe anything that was said or promised to him if thereby he could get bread to satisfy their hunger. There is the secret of the money-lender's power, although they all know that he is a very vampire. Once a man is in the money-lender's clutches he can never escape. . . . The Kunbi lies to the money-lender and cheats him whenever he can, and it is not to be wondered at.'

At the close of 1920 the whole Co-operative Credit movement in this area was in a critical position, and with it was bound up the hope of setting these outcastes upon the road to real freedom and self-respect. Tom Dobson saw clearly that to finance the situation by the usual method was out of the question. Any further advances that the Bank might make would in reality be doles. But he saw and seized upon another method which gave promise of escape even

yet from catastrophe. The solution of the difficulty was 'not co-operative credit this time, but co-operative effort.' He at once set to work. 'Workers were grouped, and animals and implements and such other resources as we had were pooled.' In this way, by joint cultivation, work was done in preparation for the harvest that could not be reaped for eight or nine months and that fear and unbelief whispered might never be reaped. 'It is pitiful to see them sometimes when the fear of the next few months seizes their minds.' 'As I write'—it was January now—'I become conscious of a tree-cricket singing in a tree over in the next field, and there is a slight breeze beginning to blow, but these things do not really affect the stillness and the wonderful beauty of the night. I am not at all tired to-night though I have had a big day, for I have come to Massai and have found that some work is being well done. . . . It is fine to see the fields being cleaned and ploughed, fields that have been idle for long and that were

overgrown with *babul* thorn bushes. There is hope in this kind of work and sometimes it seems as though the folks themselves were seeing what was happening and were beginning to be enthusiastic. . . . The fight is for five months until the rain comes and then for another five until the crop comes. Who will last through it, or how we shall last through it, we cannot say or see. . . . I have some hope. But I could hold more !' " "If the rain comes," they say, "we are lifted far above the fear of want." Och, and if the rain does not come ?'

In February he writes, 'We are at grips all right now with Mr. Famine. Just here and there by a stray well is there anything growing and in the fields at large there is nothing but barren bareness. And there will be nothing till the rains come. Four months yet without rain, then in a wee while after that we may look for some grass—damp, wet grass that the bullocks will gorge themselves on and die if they are not watched. . . . The allies of

Mr. Famine are custom, carelessness, and laziness.'

In March he reinforced his efforts by the introduction of iron ploughs. A month later a motor tractor—playfully named Austin after another Dobson—was added to his armament in this stern battle. No doubt the blood of many a Border farmer was in his veins, for it soon was evident that he who could draw so straight a furrow in life could draw it too in the ploughed field. 'I have been out ploughing again this morning,' he writes, 'and am becoming quite an expert at the game. And it is a fine game. I never knew that it was so fascinating, but to see the earth being shorn up and to smell—even in these baked fields—the smell of the moist earth beneath is fine, fine. The speed of the old wooden ploughs was a perpetual trial. . . . The fields are being ploughed, and in the case of some of the fields that has never been known before.' Not only had the fields to be made ready for the harvest that they

trusted God in His great mercy would grant, but meantime the people had to be fed, and—scarcely less important—the cattle. Rain or no rain there is one plant that grows in India, even in the most barren places—the prickly pear. The leaves are all covered over with spikes, each one long and strong and sharp as a needle. It seems the most intractable of material with which to feed even a bullock, but a way has been found, by burning off the thorns, to make use of it in such an extremity as that in which the Jalna district found itself. ‘If this fodder proves suitable,’ he writes, ‘it will cut down the cost of feeding each bullock from Rs. 15 to Rs. 5. And the profit to the animal is that if it eats this stuff for a month or two, it will take no harm from the eating of the fresh, green, wet grass that comes when the monsoon breaks. Just think of it—fresh, green, wet grass ! It is gey near past belief that such a thing is possible. The young graduate who has come from the college at Poona to show us the way of this fodder is

a young Gujerati Brāhman. He is smart, very polite and considerate to the poor folks. . . . India is getting on. This man is the proverbial drop of water, but that such a drop does exist is a great portent. He is the example of the hereditary brain of India, turned to something that is of use to his country.'

That was in March. And then at last on the 15th of June the rain came. He was out—as he always was—among the village people, and his little tent was pitched in the middle of a field. The rain came as the night was falling and with it came darkness and such torrents as only the Tropics know. How he tried to find his tent in this dark and how at last he found it, he tells in a letter to his wife in words that have in them both a shout and a sob. 'I laughed,' he says, 'out loud like any mad man as the wind came howling on and the rain swept with it. . . . All round the tent there was a flowing river of about 200 yards broad. The servant's tent was down. . . . In

about an hour we could wade the *nullah* (stream) waist deep. I found that the boy had piled all my stuff on to the bed and the table, and he had held on to the tent with the syce. The nearest Indian approach to "the boy stood on the burning deck" that I have come across! . . . So far as the sowing is concerned the anxiety is over and you can understand how it was that I laughed out loud, all by myself in the middle of the jungle last night as the rains poured and the floods came. . . . And yer ould man is not anxious this morning any more!'

We have now reached the end of Tom Dobson's first year in Jalna. With the coming of the rain relief had come to his spent spirit and to the harassed and anxious people for whom he had fought through these months with such resolution. He could take breath now for a little, and we can pause and look back and review the conflict and how he bore himself in it and what thoughts he had. A year later, when

he could see the months in better perspective and with a freer mind, he wrote, 'A famine year looks like eternity. The first year was like that. It went by flying in a way ; but to look back on it appears like a long succession of steep slopes, and I stagger along from the one to the other.' He was a weary Titan by the end, and the burden would surely have been too heavy for him had he not had a faith and a Presence to sustain him. We must realise that all that year through he was unresting in his toil, travelling continually from village to village, giving no thought to his own comfort, squandering his strength in complete unselfishness. 'I am tired from my eyes to my toes,' he says in one letter. And in another, 'I am not tired, but I have been on the go from 5.30 this morning and have done twenty miles and discussed religion and banks and bricks and schools with the people of five villages.' And to be 'on the go' over the roadless plains of Jalna with the pitiless sun above is no life of ease. But

he did not grudge giving whatever he had to give. 'Often and often have I prayed for a job wherein just the physical strength I have might be of some service. I would give it willingly, yea, with a great joy in the giving, for the giving would be easy and pleasant. It may be that this is that job. But nocht I can do can bring the rain, and there are things that I lack that are as necessary, if not more essential than the mere physical power.' He was always humble in his estimate of himself and did not see what others saw, that it was not only physical strength but character and purpose, and a faith in God that nothing could daunt that he was giving without stint to these villagers, and that his coming meant the rebirth in them of hope. When he was deeply moved and was speaking from the heart he often, as passages from his letters that have been quoted show, dropped into the familiar Scottish tongue in which deep and moving things can be expressed more naturally than by more

formal utterance. Heart speaks to heart with a complete plainness and sincerity, and the true Scot is revealed.

He had found himself now—all the degradation and helplessness of this outcaste people drew him and he became indeed their champion. ‘Yes, Jalna grips,’ he writes. ‘I ken I can never do what there is for me to do, and defect will be written over all I attempt, but oh, I am going to try.’ Waking and sleeping Jalna and Jalna’s sorrows were with him. ‘All I dream of,’ he writes, ‘is wading through gardens of flowers knee-deep in water, or of trying to plough six furrows, or of taking the tractor along George Street¹ tae the Kirk!’ Wherever he went Jalna and its needs dogged his thoughts. He went back to Poona at Christmas, but even there he could not be happy because the picture of Jalna villages was always before him. When he was there he had a talk with the distinguished Indian leader, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar,

¹ That is, in Glasgow.

and was moved with admiration of his fine qualities. 'It makes one think,' he says, 'that even from Jalna such men might be digged.' And when he attended a Christian Students Conference at the same place his mind is still moving about the same centre : 'I wished that I could get some of them for Jalna.'

As he wrestled and strove and agonised day after day, week after week, he had, as he always had, sources of strength and cheer upon which he never failed to draw. The one recreation that he allowed himself was writing and receiving letters. 'Will the mail come to-night, think ye? Or will I need to march down to Bombay and ride up the street on Dandy (his horse) and tell the manager of the P. and O., if he does not get a move on I will have him shot at dawn. Occcch, but it is a weary wait!' And there was the beauty of the skies—the irony of it—even in a famine year. 'My feasts and my plays and my concerts just now are the changing glories of the great Deccan,

and the lights are the lights of glorious dawns and of maist exquisitely quiet and delicate sunsets and deep and wonderful nights.' He had need of all these things to sustain him, and of deeper wells too to draw on, and they did not fail. 'The mail did come in all right, and though there had been days of dool and wae still it cheered me up considerably to have the letters. Is it that I am beginning to feed on sorrow? Hardly, for as I came back through the fields this morning after having seen the ploughing and after this week of things all wrong and things piling up that should be done and that never can be done—at least never can be done rightly—I started to sing the anthem, "The Lord is good to all." . . . I am beginning to believe mair and mair in direct messages. It is due to living in the Old Testament atmosphere of this place. "And the Lord said unto" . . . and there is just as much reason why our names should be there as that Moses's name or Gideon's should be there.'

'God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear,' and this good and faithful servant was one. For following the plough under those wide skies and across those wide plains, Tom Dobson was at his task with God.

VI

JALNA: 1921-1922

O wet, red swathe of earth laid bare,
O truth, O strength, O gleaming share,
O patient eyes that watch the goal,
O ploughman of the sinner's soul,
O Jesus, drive the coulter deep,
To plough my living man from sleep.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

THE great, the unspeakable relief of the rains had come and Tom Dobson could 'still his beating mind' and be glad again. 'Does not this fall sweet to you?' he quotes one man as saying to another, and adds, 'And it fell sweet to me too.' The ploughing of the fields could rest for a while but there was another ploughing that went on all the time and from which he took no rest. He had his 'Gospel of Work' to preach, and he preached by act and by example from daybreak to the sun's setting

and after. While he watched the earth, brown and bare so long, now beginning to flush with green, he never forgot that there was another harvest besides the grain and the cotton that these fields must bear—the harvest of true Christian men and women. He could never have laboured as he did if he had not that vision before him. With all his engrossment in the task of finding food for these hungry people he knew all the time that the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, nor, he added, talk. He laboured for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life. We can picture him continually in the midst of the people, his presence, to those who needed it so much, a stimulus and cheer—or, sometimes, a rebuke. Two horses scarcely sufficed to carry him to all the places that required him, and ‘Dandy’ and ‘Black Ivy’ had no idle time. Here is how his colleague, Mr. Wilkie Brown, pictures him issuing forth to each day’s work. ‘Up with the first dawn, it was seldom later than 6.30

that Tom Dobson in his khaki riding-kit, with his water-bottle slung across one shoulder, and his canvas satchel with notebooks, money, and a snack, slung across the other, was in the saddle. What a splendid figure he made ! Trained to the last ounce, as hard as nails (a tribute to the vegetarianism he constantly practised), he made a most commanding figure. Wherever he went men looked up from their work in the fields, glad and cheered to see him pass, or slunk to hide from the rebuke of those piercing steel-blue eyes, if they had failed to get to their ploughing by the appointed hour. To those who knew Jalna and its villages and undulating stretches in those days, there will always come back the vision of this knight errant, riding on his purpose of bringing succour and hope and life.'

And when evening fell and the day's work in the fields was done he would set his hand to another plough and drive his coulter deep into those untilled souls. This was the first

and chief thing with him always, and in his letters there breaks forth again and again the cry of his heart's desire to see them win back their lost manhood, and exchange serfdom for sonship in the family of God. 'I could have wept, for it all came in another revelation—how deep down they are and how I must be fighting to recover rupees when it is not the fight that should be going on at all ; but perhaps, perhaps, perhaps, as I fight for the rupees the other battle will be fought too.' His heart was wrung for them and there was no pride or contempt in his rebuke of them, however much, as he says, 'the mud of the old pit from which they were digged still clung to them.' He put on no airs, either to them or to himself, of 'the superior person.' He was far too humble and far too much in earnest for that. 'Yes, they are my brothers,' he could say with Carlyle ; 'hence this rage and sorrow.'

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he wrestled with the evil in them, how he sorrowed and agonised over them. 'One of the curses of the Mission work in this district has been the ease with which forgiveness has been earned or obtained. Many an evil has been thus lightly esteemed because all that is needed is to confess to the Sahib after being found out, and a few judicious tears will make all smooth. . . . There is a terrible judgment being laid up for me, for I mete out judgment thick, and "with what measures ye mete . . ." and my ain failings are appalling enough! But I have to try to teach and this is one of the apparent ways—apparent to me, that is, and if it is all wrong, then mine is the greater condemnation. So ye see how ye have to be praying for me that I be neither too hard nor too soft and that I have the wisdom of some few Solomons.' 'Will they see it? "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh will He . . ." That's the disappointment that makes me dumb, or should do so, for I will be sure to go on

complaining.' 'As the chief of them (a thieving caste) said one time, "Sahib, we have left our *budmashee* (evil works) and we are trying to do as you say. But we are in darkness—no teacher, no preacher, and who comes here to tell us anything?" They may be poor Christians, but what home Christians could stand the testing they stand? They have left their *budmashee* with all its excitements and gains, for what? For a quiet life as Christians with nothing allowed them but daily labour, and that they only get now and again, and only receive for it four annas (4d.) per day. Fourpence a day whiles—and yet they don't steal! Surely something can be made of such men. Nae wonder I pray for guidance, and some kind o' glimmerings o' wisdom!' 'Is it not all written already in the letters of the sair-tried Paul to the churches in Asia? We have it all here—the abominable practices breaking out now and again, the quarrellings, the jealousies, the taint of the old-time idol-worship and

its customs. Not in our day will we see a perfect Church here, no more than Paul, *puir chap*, did in his, but we can go on as well as we can in the effort to clear up some of the mess. Our Church at home is not perfect ; but O the joy of feeling that after all it has kept alive a joy and a light and a love that can lift up this people and redeem them. It is one of the finest things to see " the knowledge of the love of God " actually at work in uplifting *puir*, depressed, and despised people. " Flowers of thy heart, O God, are they ! " "

Sometimes laziness and lying had to be punished, and what punishment to inflict that would serve his end—' to plough the living man from sleep '—was often a perplexity. Once he consulted the Registrar of Co-operative Credit Societies—a Muhammadan officer for whom he had much admiration and respect—as to how to deal with a particularly bad case, and received the following reply : ' With reference to your letter of 22nd June, the

Registrar observes that no human punishment or condemnation will do them good, and that perhaps the punishment of the world to come may do them some good.' Tom Dobson's humorous comment is, 'One of the maist uplifting official letters I have had for a long time. Takes ye straight away from the ordinary red tape, doesn't it? We did laugh this morning to get it by the ordinary post.'

It is impossible to give an account here of all the varied activities that occupied him—what he did, for example, for the children, along with his colleague, Mr. Wilkie Brown, how they gathered them in from their villages to 'part time Boarding Schools,' at certain centres through the district. Anything that gave the children a better chance appealed especially to him. He writes of some of these children at such a school : 'I saw them all a month or two ago, before this school was started, and it is a treat to notice the difference now. We have got in another good "whack" at the

ould enemy here and I hope it keeps going.' There was the presentation too of his message to the multitudes in many villages to whom it was a strange tale. How best to present the message to them was a constant subject of questioning in his mind. He felt that much that the preachers said was just barren words that carried no meaning with them. 'They try to argue and to reason like the blessed Brāhman pandits! I have been trying to get them to quit talking at large and tell the folks who listen what Christ has meant to them personally.' Sometimes through the 'sahib's reasons' and 'sahib's phrases' 'there would break some gleam from a real inward experience. Everything original is like a rainbow in the sky, a sign that the life that has been beaten out of them in the past generation is beginning to return.'

Always, from first to last, there was nature and the voice that speaks through nature, to charm and still his spirit. 'Now it is time for me,' he writes once when a

black hour was upon him, ' to be off to the village to see the old gang, the hopeless gang. But in the ganging I have to walk through the peaceful night, under the great glory of the stars, and through the scents of the earth and the grasses and the cotton and the straw of the *bajri* crop. How grand it would be many a time if I could forget the human element ! No, it wouldn't be.'

Now the harvest was reaped—' a bumper crop of cotton '—and by his labour and his care and watchfulness, it was sold, too, to better advantage than ever it had been sold before. He did much to eliminate the middleman and get access for the cultivator to the market in Bombay. There was much more that he looked forward to in days to come by co-operative selling if only the opportunity had been given him. But the end was drawing near, little as any one dreamed that it could be so. In April he went on a greatly needed holiday, visiting Nagpur, Calcutta, the Sunderbunds, and finally Darjeeling. And Kinchinjunga

spoke to him deep things, things unutterable. 'I wish that you could see these hills,' he wrote to a friend in Scotland. 'There maun be hills in heaven, else there could not be a river of life, and it may be that they are like the Himalayas, so ye will see them then—if ye don't get to India before then—which is not at all in the neighbourhood of heaven. Not yet anyway; it will come.' And then, having looked and listened, he turned back to his task. 'I am going back humble once again—though it may be difficult for you to believe it. Oh but the Hills, the Hills. I canna stay long on the Hills. They say too much, and too much of things that I am feart for, for they are far above me. So I just listen for a wee while and now must hurry back to try to do something or burrrrst!'

What God had for him to do was not what he thought. The service that he had to give—perhaps the Hills had whispered it to him—was his death. How that came Mr. Wilkie Brown will tell.

‘ On Tuesday, the 18th of July, Dobson asked me to meet him at Bethel to deal with a difficult problem. Some of the members of that Society had been giving trouble, and there was something in the nature of an organised revolt. He realised the true nature of it, that it was the result of ignorant shortsightedness and inability to look ahead. We had often pointed out to them that the plans for working and reducing the debt on their fields were all made in their own interests, but to men who had never looked ahead for more than a day or two, it was making a large demand on them to expect that they would understand plans that looked two or three years ahead. As he said to one of the loyal members, “ Do you know what I think of the revolt ? I just laugh at it.” And the reply was, “ That is the best thing you can do. Just laugh at it.”

‘ But at the same time he wanted to give these men a chance to see things in their true light, and this was the reason for hold-

ing the meeting that afternoon. There was a full gathering of the members at the tent door, and for two hours or more they were allowed to say all that was in their minds. As the discussion went on, it was apparent that the opposition was the work of one or two members. They complained of *zoolum*. How did they know that when the debts were paid, they would have the fields restored to them, and much more to the same effect. It was stupidity and suspicion rather than deliberate wickedness that explained their attitude. There was no question of trying to repudiate their debts. They only wanted to be allowed to work the fields in their own way. Patiently they were listened to, and once again the whole situation was made plain to them. The only hope of their attaining freedom was by the communal working of the land, and a reversion to the old individualistic way would mean a postponement of the day of freedom. The wonder was that with all that had been done for them they were

still without understanding, but before that day closed the recalcitrants came in and the revolt was at an end. It was one more of Dobson's patiently won victories. I left him and them happy in the prospect that unanimity once more reigned and the work would go on unhindered.

' That was my last meeting with Dobson till I saw him again on the Sunday morning as he lay so sorely stricken at Dr. Mowat's bungalow.

' Leaving Bethel, he went once more on his round of the villages to the south. He was at Bhairoba's Pimpalgaon on the Thursday, on the Friday at Alamgaon, and from there he went to Mussai, the place at which he was so cruelly attacked.

' Letters from him to myself tell the details of that journey, deeply interesting and affecting, as one thinks of what followed. He was accompanied on his last ride by Benjamin Nirmal, one of the supervisors, a most efficient and devoted worker. They came to Mussai about nine in the

morning, and Dobson rode round by the fields where the workers were at their tasks.

‘ The situation at Mussai should be explained in some detail. The Christians who owned the land there had formerly belonged to a criminal tribe, Māng Garudis. They had attached themselves to the congregation at Dahipuri, mainly with a view to protection from the attentions of the police, and after a time settled down to more regular ways, and received instruction. It would take too long to tell the whole story, but about 1914 they were received into the Church on profession of their faith. When the famine conditions began to prevail about 1919, their conduct became less satisfactory, and again they came under police surveillance. We were not without hope that they too would respond to the call of working together and trying to again make good, but it was too strenuous and regular a discipline for people who had lived an easy life in the old days by pilfering, and, without telling us of their intention, the

whole community left for Bombay where they found employment in the Bombay land reclamation works. Their fields were deserted, but we had no intention that they should remain derelict. There were a good many Christians who had no land, and ten or a dozen of these with their families were brought to Mussai, and once again the fields there were under proper care and management.

‘ In addition to these fields, two or three other fields known as *mulla* or irrigated land had been acquired. The catechist who was in charge of the community at Mussai was given the use of this land, on the understanding that if he were able out of the crops raised to pay the purchase price, the fields would be made over to him, just as the fields of other members would be. For some years the arrangement worked well, and the community appeared to be making progress. To help in the cultivation of the *mulla*, two lads, Arabs, sons of a neighbouring farmer, were employed on small monthly

wages, these being recovered out of the crops.

‘ In 1918, Jaisingrao, the catechist, died, and his widow, Shakuntalabai, who was Biblewoman, was continued in her service and allowed to retain her interest in the *mulla* on the same terms. She was a woman of much force of character and considerable natural ability, and it was felt that to deprive her of that interest might be felt to be an injustice, especially as she had done much to make these fields profitable. The two Arab lads remained as land workers.

‘ When the famine supervened, and the Mussai community left for Bombay, some reorganisation was necessary. Mr. Dobson and I had frequent consultations about what should be done, and it was decided that all the fields should be under the same management and that the fields should be worked as a whole, the two Arab lads, whose conduct up to that time had been satisfactory, being put on the muster roll and

taking their share of the allotted tasks in any of the fields that required them. This went on for some time, and this was the arrangement in force at the date of Mr. Dobson's last visit. The Biblewoman, Shakuntalabai, continued her work, visiting the Christians in the villages near. At the time of Mr. Dobson's last visit, she was in Jalna in attendance at the classes for Biblewomen that were being conducted by Miss Paxton.

' One of the Arab lads, Ahmed or Hamdu, as he was generally called, had left his work early in the month. The practice was to pay the workers monthly in advance, so that none of them should complain that he had nothing to eat and therefore could not work. Ahmed's reason for leaving his work at that point is not known, but his action was reported to Mr. Dobson by the supervisor. On arriving at the well in the *mulla*, along with Benjamin, they were met by Moses Nirmal, the Biblewoman's son. Mr. Dobson got off his horse and handed it

over to the two lads to give it water. While they were doing this, Mr. Dobson told Moses to go and call Ahmed, whose house was a few hundred yards away in the next field. Moses says that he went up to the boundary and shouted to Ahmed, whom he saw in the field, that the sahib was calling him. He then came back to the well, and soon after Ahmed came up. His manner of approach was unusual. He had his turban off, holding it in one of his hands, with his arms folded. No one suspected anything, although as some of our older men, who heard of this afterwards, said, "If we had seen a man come up to the sahib like that, we should have known he meant mischief."

' Mr. Dobson asked Ahmed why he was not at work. His reply was that he had not been paid his wages for the month. Mr. Dobson at once said his wages were paid along with the others, and if he would not work he must pay the wages back. Ahmed said he would not, and Mr. Dobson, laying

his hand on his shoulder, turned him in the direction of his house, and led him forward saying, "Come along and give me the money." They went together like this for thirty or forty yards, when without a warning, Ahmed wheeled round with a dagger he had concealed in his hand, and made a cruel gash in Mr. Dobson's right side. Instinctively Mr. Dobson drew in his arm, and again Ahmed appears to have struck at him, this time striking him a terrible blow on the forehead, with such violence that the dagger broke the frontal bones of the head and remained fast in the wound. Benjamin and Moses rushed up at the first alarm to help their sahib, and Benjamin was closing with the assailant, when the latter, who had wrenched the dagger free, struck at him and inflicted a long gash on his right arm, nearly severing one of the muscles. Benjamin says he sank down in a swoon and did not know what happened afterwards. Moses declares that Ahmed turned to attack him too, and that in fear he ran off to give the

alarm to the Christians who were at work some distance away. The assailant appears again to have attacked Mr. Dobson, for he was seen slashing at him, and Mr. Dobson, half blinded with the blood from the wound on the head, was trying to hold him off, saying, "Brother, do not strike. I am not striking you." By the time the others came up, it was to find Mr. Dobson and Benjamin lying bleeding and helpless, and the assailant had made his escape. Weeping and overcome, they did their best to help their sorely stricken master, who, true to his own great heart, insisted on Benjamin's wound being first attended to. Then he directed them how to bind up his own, and all the time he was trying to cheer them, saying, "Don't cry. I'll soon be all right again." It is related that as he lay there, he was heard to speak the names of his dear ones so far away.

'The story is almost too poignant to be put into words. A message was sent to far away Jalna, sixteen miles, to let the

doctor know what had happened, but hours were to elapse before the needed aid could be given. What he suffered during these first terrible hours, no one may know. How he remained conscious, and told the weeping people what to do is one of the things we wonder at. It was his own idea that the cart should be prepared for him to take him to Jalna, and he was put in it, with Benjamin in a second one, and so they proceeded on that way of pain. It is related that he tried to cheer Benjamin, saying to him, "It's all right. Soon I'll be walking to Jalna. You'll see." It was always for others he was thinking.

' At Shewgaon, one and a half miles from Mussai, he stopped the cart. He realised that the jolting of a springless cart over those rough rocky roads was too much, and calling the headman of this village, he got him to prepare a string cot, to the sides of which bamboo poles were tied. He was laid upon that, and relays of carriers took charge of that precious burden. They

went on ; the afternoon had come and soon it would be nightfall. Mercifully the message to the doctor had reached him, and borrowing a motor car from a merchant of Jalna, he hurried out to succour his wounded colleague. It was 5 o'clock when he met him being carried in. Half the journey was done, with what suffering who can tell, and the other half was finished in the doctor's car.

' An incident of the first part of the journey should be told. A small party of police met the sahib being carried on a cot, and learning what had happened, they were going to proceed at once to look for the assailant. Mr. Dobson at once said, " Please don't do so. I don't want to make any charge against him."

' He was taken to the doctor's bungalow, and everything that skill and nursing could do for him was done.

' Mr. Brown was at Karla, where he had gone for Communion services for that weekend. On Saturday evening about 7 o'clock

a telegram from the stationmaster was handed to him just as the people were gathering for the pre-Communion service. The message read, "Come at once. Mr. Dobson hopeless." It was only the previous Tuesday that these two had parted, happy in the thought that the trouble at Bethel had been overcome, and each had gone his way cheered and hopeful. What could this mean? Cholera! that was the only thought that came into his colleague's mind. Had he been stricken down while attending some sick one? The service was held, but it was a pouring out of prayer that God in His mercy would save the life on whom so much depended. There was only one way to get back to Jalna, by the train that passed in the early hours of the morning. Going up to the station, he waited in a fever of suspense for the train that should take him to Jalna. The anxiety was increased rather than relieved when he learned from the guard of the train passing in the opposite direction, that

Mr. Dobson had been attacked by an Arab and that he was at Dr. Mowat's bungalow. Reaching Jalna at daybreak, he made his way to the doctor's house, and first met the doctor, from whom he got the terrible details of Mr. Dobson's condition. "Could I be allowed to see him?" "Well, only for a minute. We must keep him as quiet as we can."

'I went in and saw his form swathed in bandages. He was the first to speak. The Nurse, Sister Dorothy Mowat, was holding a feeding-cup to his lips. Smiling with his eyes, he said, "Have you had your *chota hazri*? I'm having mine." Then, "I thought you were at Karla." "Yes, I have just come from there to see you." "He was a wild lad, that Arab," was all the reference he made to what had happened, and telling him we were all waiting and praying for him to get well soon, the doctor and I came out. His quiet courage, and the peace in his heart were what amazed every one. But that was Tom Dobson.

‘ One thing the doctor said to me that impressed me at the time and still more in the event. He said, “ I ’ll be anxious till the fifth day is past.” He had seen so many cases where natural strength had seemed to carry men so far over such a shock, only to collapse in the end, that he expressed his anxiety in these words.

‘ There was prayer over the whole countryside for Tom Dobson. Surely if any life could be claimed, it was His, and prayer took on a new importunity. For four days we watched, with a degree of hope that seemed to grow with each day safely passed.

‘ Wednesday evening had come. Dr. and Mrs. Mowat and I were walking in the garden, and I felt that they seemed more hopeful than before. The wounds were healing quickly and cleanly, the terrible one in the head had closed up beautifully, and if only his strength would hold out, he might yet be given back to us. Next morning I was along at the house at the earliest possible hour. It was usually the

Sister who met me and gave me the news, but this time it was Mrs. Mowat, and I saw before she spoke that there was grave news. "A very bad night. The Doctor and nurses (Miss Cameron from our hospital in Poona had been summoned to help) have been up with him all night ; the heart has been failing." It was too true. The struggle after that was not greatly prolonged, and soon after midday he was at rest.

' One scarcely has the heart to go on with the story. Not that there is much to tell, for we pass into a region of conjecture where there is little to guide, and more harm than good may be done by much speaking.

' The assailant has never been caught. Various men have been arrested on suspicion, but the fact remains that Ahmed, if he is alive, is still at large. Theories and conjectures flourish in such circumstances. Whether he acted in a moment of passion, or was instigated by others who hated the

work Tom Dobson was doing in freeing so many of the people from the clutches of the despoiler, will never be known till he is found and can be got to make a clean breast of it. Threats had been made against those who were doing this work, and we knew there was an element of risk attached to it, but that it would take this form, we had dismissed from our minds as unlikely. Beyond this there is nothing to say.

‘ Yes, there is this. Tom Dobson’s work is not yet done. His spirit is alive, and those of us who had the privilege of sharing with him in the heroic struggle of these two splendid years, in which he was leader and himself more than half the host, can never doubt that there is yet a rich harvest to be reaped from the labour and sacrifice of so Christ-like a life.’

VII

THE MAN, TOM DOBSON

Thou hast great allies ;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love and man's unconquerable mind.

WORDSWORTH.

It seemed unbelievable that Tom Dobson was dead. The word, as we mostly use it, could not be fitted to his vitality. There must be, we knew, some mysterious purpose in his passing, though our eyes could not see it. Those who loved him could only bow the head in silence. He had been called to other work—work that must have needed him even more than Jalna did. In the issue of the *Record* of the United Free Church that told of his death there appeared an article by him with the title ‘Smoking Flax.’ It gave a series of pictures of Jalna scenes, sketched from the life with characteristic vividness—thieves desiring to be

taught an honest life, but with no one to teach them, hungry sheep looking up to their shepherd and not fed because he was ignorant, Christian children unable to read or write, hearing ears to which no voice spoke, souls desiring good to whom no good came. He concludes with these words—
“ ‘ The smoking flax he shall not quench.’
Where are His ministers to do his pleasure ?
Who are His servants, to fulfil His wishes ?
If they fail, the flax will be quenched, these poor little dim-burning wicks will go out, and this part of the world will be darker. If the flames are nourished and tended, what a fire might be lighted ! ’ One of his letters tells of his waking one morning with the words of the old Chartist hymn on his lips :

Flowers of Thy heart, O God, are they,
Let them not waste like weeds away,
Their heritage a sunless day.
God save the people.

These things tell of the passion of this man's heart for these bruised reeds. He

knew how sunless was their day even in the blazing noon of Jalna. He felt the burden of his task to be almost too heavy sometimes for his tender heart to sustain. 'It's an awfu' job,' he says, 'to be aye wakenin' folks. It makes me gey an' tired whiles.'

As one looks back at him, illuminated by death and by what follows death, it is with a new sense of the power of his nature and of the depth of his soul. He was not good at uttering his feelings in speech—though those who have read the extracts from his letters do not need to be told how exceptional was his power of written expression—but few could feel joy and sorrow as he felt them, to few have been given his power of enjoyment and his capacity for love. On one occasion he had an opportunity of hearing great music on the Victrola. He writes, 'It was too much for me. I cannot thole the thinking and the memories that music wakens and I sat in gey pain for a while.' And what the Hills said to him we have seen. But the love of friends

pierced deeper even than his sense of the world's wonder and beauty. 'I am no saint of the Middle Ages,' he says in one of his letters. 'I seem to hae mair than my share o' capacity for mere human love.' It is impossible to measure the pain that he suffered from separation, and from the spectacle of the immensity of the task set to him because of the hardness of men's hearts. It is impossible to measure also the comfort and content that came to him from God Himself as he knew this to be a task given him to do and wholly worth doing.

'I am back and glad to be back, calm and quiet so far, even after hearing of the snags that await me, and maybe even sneakingly pleased that there are snags for me, that there are some things that it was thought better to leave till I got back! A very low down human saint, ye see, of whom it may be said that he lo'es his wife and his weans and his little sister almost as well as he lo'es himsel'! So ye needna think that there is ocht special for me in being amang

the dust and the heat and things—for it is here that I have pleasure in being, though, like an unreasonable being, I grouse about it at times!’ Again he tells with quiet humour how a lady missionary asked him, ‘Is Jalna nice?’ ‘“It is vastly interesting,” ses I, “and a maist fascinating work, but not yet can I say that it is nice.”’

But in spite of all, his letters up to the very end are full of his undaunted courage. Some one had written to him in a mood of depression and had expressed dislike of the lighter kinds of music. He replied, ‘(The great music) I hear and *see* in the silences and brightnesses of this immense land. Yet I feel that I can laugh as I never laughed in my life before.’ After his death one of his friends in Poona summed up his life in two lines of Rudyard Kipling that describe him with singular felicity :

E’en as he trod that day to God, so walked he from
his birth,
In simpleness and gentleness and honour and clean
mirth.

With three more passages from his letters—among the very last that he wrote—we shall conclude our story. They show how to the last hour he kept his eyes open to facts, however grim they might be, and how, nevertheless, his courage never wavered and his faith never failed. ‘Even though the Jalna job is a terror,’ he wrote from Poona in the month of his death, ‘it is there that I want to be.’ And a fortnight later when back in the midst of the ‘terror,’ he writes again: ‘Sometime in the future when about sixteen sahibs have followed and been tucked under the tombstones white, they will begin to listen and say like the Bethel people when it is too late, “What a sahib of long foresight Tom Dobson was.”’ And finally we have this considered summary of it all from a letter to his wife. ‘It is great and greatly satisfying to be in this work, but we are human and whiles we weary and whiles we weary very sair, but I do not think that because we have that capacity for longing in our

hearts our work is spoiled thereby ! Na, we can weary often, but if we carry on with all the courage of our spirits, there will perhaps be some good from some of it some day. I am sure that if this field were properly worked there would be a response that would astonish the Committee and every one else.'

Others besides Tom Dobson will, no doubt, have to give their lives before so great a work is accomplished as the setting free of India's serfs. The yoke of the oppressor has been riveted too firmly by the centuries to be cast off yet awhile even by such strength as his. His death sanctifies the task, and others will take it up in his spirit and, under the eyes of his Master, will carry it one day to accomplishment. And all who knew him, as the memory of what he was renews their courage, will often say in the words carved on his tombstone, 'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.'



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JUL 9 '24 JUL 12 '24	<i>[Faint signature]</i>
DEC 8 '24 DEC 8 '24	M. S. Dolbeer 1800 Maryland
MAR 10 '21 MAR 18	G. Koppole. 72 Bates Hall.
FEB 18 '32 MAR 10 '32	Sven Nilson Tellers
MAR 10 '32 MAR 14 '32	D. Brown Staff
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